

## Sūrah Shūrā

### Central Theme and Period of Revelation

The central theme of this *sūrah* also is monotheism. In deference to this central theme, a warning has also been sounded about the Day of Judgement as well because the real importance of monotheism is brought forth when there exists faith in the arrival of the day in which justice will be dispensed, and when each person shall have to encounter the one and powerful God. No one can dare save any person from His grasp or speak before Him without His permission.

The basis of reasoning in this *sūrah* is the history of the preaching mission of the prophets of God: all prophets from Adam (sws) and Noah (sws) called people to this very religion of monotheism, and they too were taught by God through divine revelation just as the Qur'ān is being divinely revealed. The reason that various groups have differed with one another on religion is not that the prophets of God came with different religions; the only reason for this difference is personal enmity and envy. Even after true knowledge had been revealed by the Almighty various groups differed because of stubbornness and because of being inebriated with the notion of superiority over others. In this manner, people began dividing into various groups and sects. The Qur'ān has been revealed as a barometer and scale for the truth. If people do not accept the verdict of this scale, then it will be the scale of the Day of Judgement which will deliver their verdict.

A casual look at the motifs of the *sūrah* also shows that it was revealed at the end of the Makkan period right before migration to Madīnah. Thus the nature of the address of the Prophet (sws) to the leaders of the Quraysh is that of bidding farewell; in other words, he had fulfilled his obligation towards them; it is now their own responsibility, and if they still do not act responsibly, then they should be prepared for the consequences. Similarly, it is evident from what is said in this *sūrah* about the Muslims that they are now entering in a phase in which they will have to fulfill their obligation in the form of a collectivity and thus should be prepared for this. The Prophet (sws) is repeatedly assured that his responsibility was to clearly present the truth before the people which he has fulfilled; to forcibly inject faith in the hearts of people was never

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his responsibility; he should now consign their fate to God. In this regard, answers are also given to certain objections which were raised by the opponents on the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws).

### **Analysis of the Discourse**

Following is the sequence adopted in the discourse:

**Verses (1-10):** The Prophet (sws) is addressed and informed that the very religion of monotheism which was divinely revealed to him by the Almighty was also divinely to the messengers before him and the method of revelation was also the same. Great and exalted is the Almighty; whatever is in the heavens and the earth is in His control; the heavens are rent asunder because of His fear; the angels are continuously glorifying Him and also seeking repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. God is observing those who have set up deities besides Him. The Prophet (sws) is not responsible for their faith. He should warn through the Arabic Qur'ān revealed to him the people of Makkah and its whereabouts of the Day in which the Almighty will gather all mankind, and then will admit the believers into Paradise and the disbelievers into Hell; if these people are not embracing faith, then this is not his responsibility. The established practice of God regarding guidance cannot be altered; only those will be guided who are worthy of being guided.

**Verses (11-20):** God alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth; He only has their keys and He only blesses people with children and sustenance. No one shares His divinity. All the prophets of God preached this very religion of monotheism and urged people to adhere to it and not create any differences in it. Those who created differences in it did so after true knowledge had come to them from God and did so merely because of mutual enmity and prejudice. Had the Almighty not fixed a day to resolve this dispute, He would have decided their matter forthwith. The Prophet (sws) is directed to preach this very religion and strongly adhere to it; he should inform people that he has professed faith in this Book which the Almighty has revealed as a scale of justice and that he has been directed to decide affairs between them through this scale of justice; people who fight with him even after this will be inflicted by a grave punishment. The Prophet (sws) should warn them that they should not regard the Day of Judgement to be far off; they should benefit from the respite which has been granted to them by the Almighty; otherwise, they should remember that God is merciful and also powerful and revengeful. If He gives people some time even after their rebelliousness and spreading anarchy, He does so because of His established practice. Once this time expires, He will deal with everyone

in the manner that person is worthy of.

**Verses (21-26):** If these Idolaters have invented some partners of God who have invented a different religion than the one brought by the prophets of God, then neither this religion nor their partners of God will avail them on the Day of Judgement. On that day, the Idolaters will express great sorrow and frustration on their fate; only they will succeed who had faith and did righteous deeds. The Prophet (sws) is asked to tell his people that if he is very concerned about their guidance, then it is not because he wants some reward from them; it is merely because the obligation he feels towards his close relationship with them has made him anxious; if they embrace faith, they will be rewarded for it themselves. The Prophet (sws) is told that if these people regard his divine revelations to be concoctions, then this much should be sufficient for his satisfaction that he knows that it is God Who has blessed him with these revelations; if God wants, He can terminate this process and the Prophet (sws) on his own accord can never initiate it again. Moreover, what needs to be observed is the effects and blessings of this divine favour: how through it, He is obliterating evil and elevating the truth. Whatever these people say, the Prophet (sws) should disregard it; those who are worthy of it will take the initiative and accept his call; this should be enough for his satisfaction.

**Verses (27-36):** If these people regard their world superiority to be a reason of being on the right path, then the Prophet (sws) should tell them that before the favours of the Hereafter the greatest riches of this world have no significance. The Almighty wanted to protect people from the trials of Satan; hence He gave people who were slave to worldly pleasures as much as His wisdom entailed. Otherwise, He could have given them full respite so that they could have gathered all the riches of the world. This respite by Him should not be misconceived by people. Everything is under His control. He can seize people whenever He wants to; however, He ignores people in spite of their ungrateful attitude and rebelliousness. If a person has keen eyes, he can clearly see from his own experiences and observations that every person is in God's control. If God does not protect people, then no means that they have can protect them. Whatever disbelievers gain is temporary and transient. In the Hereafter, God will grant eternal kingdom to those who embrace faith and put their trust in Him.

**Verses (37-43):** The true qualities of believers are highlighted and they are given some special instructions which were required by them for their guidance and for carrying out their responsibilities in the current and future circumstances. Contextual indications show that in that period of time the excesses committed by the disbelievers had greatly increased,

and Muslims too were shaping up in the form of an organized group and community. Thus they were informed of certain essential instructions so that they do not take a wrong step in these testing times.

**Verses (44-53):** This is the closing section of the *sūrah*. At the beginning, the opponents are warned. After that they are invited to accept the call of the Messenger and told that they still have a chance to accept this call and salvage themselves in the Hereafter. After that the Prophet (sws) is directed to show patience if these people are not listening to him; he has fulfilled the responsibility that was imposed on him; forcing down faith in their hearts is not his responsibility. Such is the meanness of people that if God blesses them with mercy, they start showing conceit, and if they are afflicted with some calamity because of their misdeeds, they start to despair and become ungrateful. These people are very proud of their alleged deities; however, God has no partners. If because of their pride and vanity, they demand that God speak to them face to face, then they should know that whoever person God speaks to, He speaks through revelation and this has its own ways; it is such a revelation that has been sent to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), and this is a great blessing of God on him and through his means on others otherwise before this he was neither aware of the Book nor of the details of faith and its requirements.

### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (۱) عسق (۲) كَذَلِكَ يُوحِي إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (۳)  
لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (۴) تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ  
فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ  
الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (۵) وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهُ حَفِيفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
بِوَكِيلٍ (۶) وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ  
الْجُمُعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ (۷) وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً  
وَلَكِنْ يَدْخُلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (۸) أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا  
مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ فَإِنَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (۹) وَمَا  
اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ (۱۰)

In the name of God, the Most Gracious the Ever-Merciful.

This is Ham Mim 'Ayn Sīn Qāf. It is in this manner that the wise

Almighty sends down revelations to you, and in this manner has He been sending revelations to those who were before you. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and the earth and very lofty and exalted is He. The heavens are almost ripping apart from above, and the angels glorify the name of their Lord celebrating His praise, and seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. Be informed! He alone is the forgiver and the merciful. And God is watching over those who have made other accomplisners besides God, and you have not been deputed over them as an enforcer. (1-6)

And in this manner have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may warn the people of Makkah and those who dwell around it and warn them of the day on which all will be gathered which is certain to come. On that day, one group will enter Paradise and one will enter Hell. (7)

And if it had been God's will, He could have made them a single community. However, He admits to His mercy whomsoever He wills; and those have wronged their souls will neither have any accomplisher nor helper. Have they set up other accomplisners besides Him? So they should bear in mind that God alone is the accomplisher. And He shall bring back the dead to life and has power over all things. And whatever matter you have differed, its judgement rests with God. He is my Lord. In Him I have put my trust, and to Him I turn. (8-10)

### Explanation

حم (١) عسق<sup>١</sup>

This is the Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah*. Readers may remember that the previous two *sūrahs* too have this name. Here there is an addition of the words: عسق. Commonality in names bears witness to the commonality in central themes. This addition is an indication of the fact that there are certain topics in this *sūrah* which are not found in the two previous ones. Thus by going through the analysis of the discourse of these *sūrahs*, the distinct topics can be ascertained.

كَذَٰلِكَ يُوحِي إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ<sup>٢</sup> (٣)

The word كَذَٰلِكَ refers to the topics mentioned in the *sūrah*. The name of the *sūrah* signifies a brief concept of these topics and hence a

1. This is Ham Mim 'Ayn Sīn Qāf.

2. It is in this manner that the wise Almighty sends down revelations to you, and in this manner has He been sending revelations to those who were before you.

reference through this word to these topics is very apt. The implied meaning would be that the things which are being revealed to Muḥammad (sws) in the *sūrah* called by this name have also been revealed to prophets who came before him. Brevity pervades this verse in expressing its meanings. The overall thing that is intended to be conveyed is something to the effect: “In this manner, the Almighty is sending His revelations to you the way He sent His revelations to the prophets who came earlier.” Examples of such brevity can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* and more are forthcoming.

The word كَذَلِكَ is also referring to unity of content and to the similarity of the means of revelation. In other words, the Almighty taught the same things to all the prophets and messengers as He is teaching Muḥammad (sws) and for this teaching He adopted the same method as He did in his case. Hence there is nothing in this Book from any aspect which may startle people and be unknown to them. If they are being startled and showing aversion, then this is their own misdoing.

Succeeding verses point to the unity of content in the following words:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ  
إِلَيْهِ (١٣:٤٢)

He has enjoined on you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have now revealed to you, which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion that adhere to this religion and do not create any divisions in it. What you are calling to is weighing heavily on the Idolaters. (42:13)

It is evident from this that the very Islam and the religion of monotheism to which the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) called the people was the one which all the earlier prophets were deputed to preach; however, the Idolaters in their frenzied bias for the religion they had invented became enemies of the religion of the truth and the People of the Book too followed suit in the same vein.

As for the similarity of means, further ahead the words of the *sūrah* are:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ  
بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي

مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِنْ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ نَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا (٥١:٤٢)

And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His permission, he sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and Wise. Thus have We revealed to you a spirit from our matters. (42:51)

It is evident from this that today those people who are demanding that if God speaks to His prophet, He should speak to them as well or He should appear before them so that they are able to see them and hear His words, then this is nothing but arrogance and foolishness on their part. Neither does God converse with anyone in this manner nor does it befit His majesty to appear before people; He has always stuck to this method that whomsoever He chooses as prophet He converses with him through revelations and there is a specific principle which governs these revelations.

The purpose of saying these words is to assure the Prophet (sws) and to conclusively communicate the truth to the opponents. Obviously, when he is calling people towards the same religion of truth to which all the prophets and messengers called, then he is not presenting something which could alarm and startle people. Those who are startled by it and are showing their aversion to it in fact oppose the teachings of all the prophets and are afflicted with bias and enmity. Similarly, if the Prophet (sws) is not able to make people observe God or make others hear Him when He is speaking, then this also is no flaw of his prophethood. He is presenting the revelations sent to him by God and whoever God speaks to, He does so by revelation. He does not bless anyone beyond this.

The mention of الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ from among God's noble attributes is meant to assure the Prophet (sws) and warn his opponents. Since God is الْعَزِيزُ (powerful), He can catch hold the arrogant any time He wants to and if He does not catch them immediately then it is because He is granting them respite as per His wisdom. For this reason, the Prophet (sws) should repose his trust in God Who is powerful and wise, and consign the matter of these people to Him.

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (٤)

This is an explanation of the Almighty's attribute الْعَزِيزُ (powerful): whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him and everything

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3. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and the earth and very lofty and exalted is He.

is in His control. Neither is anyone His associate in any matter nor is anything beyond His control or jurisdiction. He is a very lofty and exalted being. And no one has the status to be His peer or equal. The implication is that if He is giving time to people, then this does not mean that people are beyond His control, and if He has bestowed someone with respect and honour, then that person should not become so conceited to demand observing Him or conversing with Him. The presence of God is exalted and lofty is His being.

تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ  
لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ<sup>4</sup>

This is an explanation of God's attributes الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (lofty and exalted) mentioned in the previous verse. Such is the weight of His loftiness that the heavens above are almost ripping, and the angels because of being so near to Him are glorifying and celebrating His praises all the time out of His fear, and continue to seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. In other words, the foolish have made the angels partners to God and expect that such is their status before God that these angels will be able to secure for their worshippers high ranks; whereas, the fact of the matter is that the angels tremble with His fear and continuously glorify (do *tasbīḥ*) Him and celebrate His praises (do *ḥamd*).

The difference between *tasbīḥ* and *ḥamd* has been pointed out at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. The former absolves God of all evil and the latter affirms every good in Him. In other words, these angels regard God beyond all things which are against His majesty, the most prominent of these being polytheism, and affirm all lofty attributes in Him, the most prominent of these being monotheism.

The words لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ allude to exactly the same thing which the following words of Sūrah Mu'min, the previous *sūrah* allude to:

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ  
لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (٤٠: ٧)

Who are carrying the throne, and those who are around it glorify their Lord while celebrating His praises, profess faith and keep

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4. The heavens are almost ripping apart from above, and the angels glorify the name of their Lord celebrating His praise, and seek repentance for the inhabitants of the earth. Be informed! He alone is the forgiver and the merciful.



seeking for forgiveness for the believers. (40:7)

It is evident from the above cited verse that the angels seek forgiveness for those inhabitants of the earth who are believers. Since it was evident that this forgiveness they seek is for the believers, hence it was not mentioned in the verse under discussion. This seeking of forgiveness of the angels is their intercession which they are doing for the believers in the presence of their Lord.

The words *أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ* sound an apt admonishment to the Idolaters: they should make it very clear upon themselves that only God is One Who forgives and is merciful. If this was in the jurisdiction of the angels, then why would they so earnestly and humbly request God to forgive people?

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهُ حَفِيفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (٦)<sup>5</sup>

This verse admonishes the Idolaters in very harsh words, and assures the Prophet (sws) that if even after these clear arguments those have set up other accomplisners for themselves besides God and are adamant on this after all admonition and reminders, then they should know that God is watching over them. The obvious outcome is that as soon as the time allotted to them expires, His wrath will seize them. After this, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he has not been made responsible to necessarily make them tread the path of truth; his responsibility was to communicate the truth to them which he is fulfilling and should keep on doing so as long as His Lord asks him to do so. If they are not accepting faith, they will be held accountable for it and not him. This aspect is discussed further ahead in the sūrah in the following words:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ (٧)<sup>6</sup>

The word *كَذَلِكَ* refers to the subject of the verse of the sūrah. In other words, just as the Almighty sent down His revelations to the prophets and messengers who came before the Prophet (sws) in a similar manner

5. And God is watching over those who have made other accomplisners besides God, and you have not been deputed over them as an enforcer.

6. And in this manner have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may warn the people of Makkah and those who dwell around it and warn them of the day on which all will be gathered which is certain to come. On that day, one group will enter Paradise and one will enter Hell.

the Almighty has sent down this Arabic Qur'ān to him so that he can inform people in the central city of Arabia and its whereabouts.

The word Qur'ān is qualified by the attribute عَرَبِيّ (Arabic) to delineate the favour of God and to conclusively deliver the truth. As I have explained earlier, in the *tafsīr* of verse twenty four of Sūrah Ḥam mīm al-Sajdah this measure left the people of Arabia with no excuse that the religion of God was not fully explained to them.

The words أُمُّ الْقُرَى refer to Makkah because they imply the central city, and it was Makkah who occupied this status in Arabia. Here instead of using the word Makkah, the words أُمُّ الْقُرَى are used for the purpose of conclusive communication of the truth; if a message has been delivered to the central city, then this means that people of the country have been openly communicated it. If instead of أُمُّ الْقُرَى, this call sprang from some other part of Arabia, then some people could have raised the objection that why did the Qur'ān address their masses instead of addressing their leaders and intelligentsia because it was this section of people who have properly evaluated the weight carried by this call.

Some people interpret the words وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا as referring to the whole world. The reason for their interpretation is that the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was sent as a messenger to the whole world; they are of the view that for this reason, this expression does not merely refer to the nearby cities of Makkah or Arabia but those of the whole world. Although this fact itself is true that the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is the last and final prophet of God and for this reason his call and message is for the whole world, however, this interpretation of the words وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا clearly exceeds their ambit of application in the first place, and in the second it is not even needed for the real purpose. The Prophet Muḥammad (sws) himself has said that he has been sent with two spheres of preaching: one general and the other specific. His specific sphere relates to Makkah and Arabia and to them he conclusively communicated the truth in a direct manner; his general sphere relates to the whole world and the Qur'ān as well as the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) has imposed the responsibility of bearing witness to the true religion on the Muslim *ummah* till the Day of Judgement, and it is on the basis of this responsibility that the Almighty has bestowed this *ummah* with the status of witnesses to the truth (شهداء (الله في الأرض)). In its capacity as witnesses to the truth, it is the responsibility of this *ummah* that just as the messenger of God has borne witness to the true religion before members of this *ummah*, in a similar manner, they should bear witness to it before other people. As a requirement of this responsibility, it is the honour of this *ummah* that one group among it will always adhere to the truth – it will adhere to it even when the poison of sin

runs in every vein of this world.<sup>7</sup>

After general warningn (*indhār-i ‘ām*), the words *وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعِ لَا رَيْبَ* mention specific warning (*indhār-i khās*): the Prophet (sws) should specifically warn these people of *يَوْمَ الْجُمُعِ* (the day of gathering). Obviously the words *يَوْمَ الْجُمُعِ* refer to the Day of Judgement. Calling the Day of Judgement by this name, creates the awareness that on this day the Almighty will gather everyone without any exception: the worshipers and the worshipped, the leaders and the followers, the prophets and their companions as well as the disbelievers and their supporters. In the presence of all these in His open court of hearing the Almighty will decide the true role each person played with regard to His religion and will pinpoint the people who differed and created anarchy as well as those who tried to maintain its unity and purity and will also single out those who deserve reward and those who deserve punishment.

The words *فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ* describe the verdict of the open court hearing: on that day, one group – that is the believers – will necessarily enter Paradise and the other group – that is the disbelievers – will necessarily go to Hell.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ  
مَنْ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا نَصِيرٌ<sup>8</sup>(٨)

This verse answers an objection that when the Almighty has given people only one religion, why did He not desire that all adhere to it? Why did He give them the liberty to creates difference in this religion and the result of this attitude should ultimately make one group worthy of Paradise and another worthy of Hell?

The answer given is that had God wanted to do this, He would have done it; no one could have stopped Him; however, He did not desire that He force people to accept His guidance; on the contrary, He desired that He give people vision and intellect and also give them the liberty to choose the guidance presented to them if they wanted in the light of their vision and intellect and thus become worthy of God’s mercy. The intention referred to in the words *يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ* is subservient to

7. I have discussed this view in detail in my book: *Da‘wat-e dīn awr us kā ṭarīqah-i kār*. Those who would like to study the arguments of this view may look up this book. See: Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī. *Da‘wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah-i kār*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1989), 33-47.

8. And if it had been God’s will, He could have made them a single community. However, He admits to His mercy whomsoever He wills; and those have wronged their souls will neither have any accomplices nor helper.

His mercy and justice. For this reason, these words would mean that His justice will govern which people will enter His mercy. The Qur'ān has made evident this principle by the subsequent words as well: وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ie the wrongdoers (the disbelievers and idolaters) will neither have any accomplices nor any helper. In other words, neither will their alleged deities be of any avail to them nor will they have any group or faction who could help them. It is evident from this that only those people will be deprived of God's mercy who wrong their souls and who are Idolaters, and this will be so because it will be a requirement of His justice. His intention is based on His justice and no one has the power to change His intention.

This topic is mentioned in the Qur'ān at various places, and I have explained it many times in this *tafsīr*. For further explanation, I will cite some verses.

In Sūrah Yūnus, the words are:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (١٠: ٩٩-١٠٠)

Had your Lord intended, whoever are in the earth would have embraced faith; so will you force people to become believers, and no soul can profess faith except with God's permission and God burdens with filth those who do not use their intellect. (10:99-100)

It is evident from this that the matter of faith and guidance rest on the intention of God and His intention blesses those people the urge to accept faith who use their intellect. The intellect of those who do not use it is buried beneath a pile of filth so that they are not able to see the light radiated by faith and guidance. This topic is mentioned in Sūrah Sajdah in the following words:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَآتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدَاهَا (٣٢: ١٣)

Had We intended, We have given each soul its guidance. (32:13)

In other words, if the Almighty intended to force people to accept faith, He would have made everyone a believer; on the contrary, He tried people by giving them the freedom as to who chooses the path of faith and who the path of disbelief; those who will tread the path of disbelief will be cast into Hell by Him and those who will tread the path of belief

will be admitted in to Paradise by Him.

This premise is mentioned very clearly in Sūrah Dahr in the following words:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٢٩-٣١)

This is a reminder. So whoever desires he should take the path of his Lord and you will not desire until God desires. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing, wise. He admits into His mercy whomsoever He wishes. And for those who have wronged their souls, He has prepared a grievous punishment. (76:29-31)

The Prophet (sws) and his companions are assured in these verses: they should not be worried on the stubbornness and obduracy shown by people; the Qur'ān is not something that should be forced upon them; it is merely a reminder; so they should remind people through it. Whoever wants should profess faith and whoever wants should adopt the path of disbelief. If the Prophet (sws) and his companions desire that these people should embrace faith, then merely having a desire can bear no fruit unless God intends and God's intention is governed by His knowledge and His wisdom. He admits into His mercy only those whom He desires and He desires so for only those who do not wrong their souls and in fact make use of the abilities given to them by God and also give due importance to His guidance. As for those who are blind in spite of having eyes, then for such wrong-doers the Almighty has prepared a grievous punishment.

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٩)

The question posed in this verse is meant to express wonder and negation. In the previous verse, it was said that such people do not have any accomplisher or supporter. This premise is further explained here: if they have set up other accomplishers for themselves besides God, then this is their foolishness. Only God is the real accomplisher – both in the Herein and in the Hereafter. It is He who will bring back the dead to life and every one is going to come to His presence. So how can anyone else become the accomplisher. And if God has power over everything, then in

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9. Have they set up other accomplishers besides Him? So they should bear in mind that God alone is the accomplisher. And He shall bring back the dead to life and has power over all things.

His presence what will be the need of any accomplisher and what benefit can be the protection of the greatest of accomplishes before Him?

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ<sup>10</sup>

In verse eight, Muḥammad (sws) was assured that he should not be worried on the stubbornness and arrogance of his opponents. The established of God regarding providing guidance to people is unalterable. He was told that his opponents are caught in the noose of God's divine law, and so he should consign their matter to God. As a result of this command, the Prophet (sws) consigned their matter to God. Since what is said in this verse was actually a compliance of what is said in verse eight for this reason no new directive was required from God and what needed to be said was said through the tongue of the Prophet (sws). Thus the words of this verse from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) are directed at his opponents. They are told by him that in whatever matter of religion they differed – whether it was the belief in *tawḥīd* or in the Hereafter – his responsibility was only to deliver the truth to them, which he has; now the decision rests with God; God will decide whether he fulfilled this responsibility of delivering the truth or whether these people made a mistake in recognizing the truth; God is the Lord of the Prophet (sws) and hence in God has the Prophet (sws) put his trust and to God he turns to decide between him and these people.

## Section II: Verses (11-20)

In the succeeding verses, the topic of monotheism discussed in earlier verses is further explained: The real accomplisher is the Almighty alone. Sustenance and offspring are His gifts. The harmony found in the discordant elements of this universe clearly evidences the fact that except for the will and intention of the one and only God, there is no other will or intention that can interfere in it.

After this, the topic discussed in the first verse is explained: from Noah (sws) to Jesus (sws) every prophet has preached this very religion of monotheism and stopped people from creating differences in it. However, their followers created differences in it even after they had been given clear knowledge and thereby deprived themselves of God's guidance.

After this, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is directed to preach this very

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10. And whatever matter you have differed, its judgement rests with God. He is my Lord. In Him I have put my trust, and to Him I turn.

religion of the prophets before people and should strongly adhere to its call. He should inform those who are opposing his call that he has professed faith in the Book of God which He has revealed to judge between the differences they have created; if they do not accept its judgement, then the scale set up on Final Day will judge between them; the Day of Judgement is certain to come; their current state of affluence should not lead them to think that it is the result of they being on the right path; the Almighty gives affluence and riches in this world to those also who are the enemies of the truth; however, they will have no share in the Hereafter.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study the subsequent verses.

### Text and Translation

فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (١١) لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٢) شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يُنِيبُ (١٣) وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَفَقَضَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ (١٤) فَلِذَلِكَ فَادْعُ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (١٥) وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ (١٦) اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ (١٧) يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ أَلَا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ (١٨) اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ (١٩) مَن كَانَ يَرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَن كَانَ يَرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَّصِيبٍ (٢٠) أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنَ بِهِ اللَّهُ

وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَضْلِ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢١) تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَهُمْ وَقِيعٌ بِهِمْ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ (٢٢)

He alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, He has created pairs for you from your own species and created species from the cattle as well; He sows you in this cultivated field. Nothing is like Him. He alone hears all and sees all. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases. Indeed, He has knowledge of all things. (11-12)

He has enjoined on you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to you, which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion that adhere to this religion and do not create any divisions in it. What you are calling to is weighing heavily on the Idolaters. God chooses whomsoever He wants to come to Him and He guides those to Himself who turn to Him. (13)

And these people divided themselves merely because of mutual obduracy only after true knowledge had come to them. And had not a thing been ascertained by God till an appointed term, He would have immediately decided among them. And those have been made the inheritors of the Book after them are inflicted with a baffling doubt. (14)

Therefore call people to this religion and adhere to it the way you have been directed to and do not follow their desires. And declare: "Whatever Book has revealed, I profess faith in it and I have been directed to judge between you. God alone is our Lord and your Lord. Our deeds are for us and your deeds for you; no argument is needed among us. God will bring us all together and to Him all shall return." (15)

As for those who argue about God after He has been acknowledged, their arguments will have no weight with their Lord, and wrath is on them and for them is a grievous punishment. (16)

It is God who has revealed the Book with decisive truth and the scale and who knows the Hour of Doom may be fast approaching. Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, and those who believe in it dread it and know it is certain to come. Beware! Those who dispute about the Hour of doom have strayed far into error. (17-18)

Merciful is God towards His servants. He blesses with sustenance to whomsoever He desires and is very powerful and mighty. And whoever seeks the harvest of the world to come, We increase his harvest and [also give his share to him from this world also] and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We grant him a share of it but in the world to come he shall have no share at all. (19-20)



**Explanation**

فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا  
يَذَرُوكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ<sup>(١١)</sup>

This verse is a further explanation of verse ten: عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ. It is God Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and it is He Who has created human beings and all other creatures. There is no one else who can be a peer to Him viz a viz His being and attributes; so who can be worthy of being called His associate and regarded to be one's Lord and accomplisher.

The antecedent of the genitive pronoun in يَذَرُوكُمْ فِيهِ is not found in a specific word; it refers to the meaning which emanates from these words. It emanates from the words that since God has created pairs from within the species of human beings and the cattle, it is as if He has set up a system of production or harvest within their categories in which He continues to nourish and sustain them. Such pronouns are used in Arabic. Some very clear examples can be seen in the preceding *sūrahs*.

In the previous section of the verse the power and wisdom of the creator of heavens and the earth was alluded to; the words لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ point to the consequence of these: Is there any one who can be a peer to the being Who has created such great things as the heavens and the earth and Who has set up such an amazing system of creation of human beings. Nothing is like Him nor can anything ever be like Him. He is peerless as far as His being and attributes are concerned. Consequently, if He is the creator of the heavens, then it is He who brings down whatever descends from them; similarly, when He is the creator of the earth, then it is he who brings out whatever comes out of it. Moreover, when He is the creator of man and woman – in fact the male and female gender of all forms of creation, then it is He Who brings into existence whatever creation comes into being from them. In other words, when no one other than God can be regarded as the creator of the heavens and the earth and of man and woman, then how can things which come into existence become of the inter-play of these objects be ascribed to some other being? Who is it that has accomplished even one of these tasks or has the capability of doing them so that he can be regarded as God's peer.

The words وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ portray a further message to the previous

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11. He alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, He has created pairs for you from your own species and created species from the cattle as well; He sows you in this cultivated field. Nothing is like Him. He alone hears all and sees all.

one: just as a study of this universe reveals that no one is God's peer, it also reveals that He alone is the one Who really listens and knows. A creator who really listens and knows can bring into existence such an expansive universe and He alone can keep it intact. So when His power is matchless and His knowledge is all-embracing, then everyone should worship Him and ask their needs from Him alone; He listens to all and knows everything; no means or mediation is required to ask from Him.

لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ<sup>(١٢)</sup>

When the Almighty is the creator of the heavens and the earth, then it is essential that He be their master as well. How is it possible that He create them and then consign the keys of their treasures to others? Rain comes down at His bidding and the earth expels its treasure at His directive. It is God Who as per the dictates of His knowledge and wisdom blesses with abundance of livelihood whomsoever He wants to and constricts the livelihood of whomsoever He wants to. No deity has any role in sustaining and providing people nor do they have any part in the distribution of substance. All these matters are in the jurisdiction of God. For this reason, He alone is worthy of being showing gratitude. He has knowledge of everything and hence people should only pin their hopes in Him. They should fear Him alone and if anyone has constricted resources and provisions, he should not make this evil estimation that God has no knowledge of his circumstances or that He has done injustice to him; on the contrary, he should rest assured that whatever is happening is in God's knowledge and there is wisdom in it.

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يُنِيبُ<sup>(١٣)</sup>

This verse while addressing the Quraysh and the people of Arabia

12. Nothing is like Him. He alone hears all and sees all. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases. Indeed, He has knowledge of all things.

13. He has enjoined on you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have revealed to you, which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion that adhere to this religion and do not create any divisions in it. What you are calling to is weighing heavily on the Idolaters. God chooses whomsoever He wants to come to Him and He guides those to Himself who turn to Him.

explains the introductory verses of this *sūrah* in which the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that the religion of truth which is being revealed to him is the very one which was revealed to earlier prophets and messengers. Thus the Almighty has prescribed for them the same religion as He prescribed for Noah (sws) and which is now being revealed to Muḥammad (sws). This same religion was also prescribed to Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws). Thus this religion is not something new or alien to them; in fact, every prophet from the beginning to this final Prophet (sws) preached this very religion and this is the true religion of God.

The prophets of God are mentioned here in a particular sequence: at the beginning, the first and last of them – Noah (sws) and Muḥammad (sws) – are mentioned. Then three great prophets – Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) – are specially mentioned who came in between. These three are specially mentioned because those who claimed to follow them existed before the Qur’ān: the Idolaters of Arabia claimed to be the followers of Abraham (sws), while the Jews and Christians claimed to be the followers of Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) respectively. In this manner, the whole history of the prophets is concisely referred to, and *ummahs* worthy of mention too are highlighted.

The words *أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ* mention the religion which was enjoined upon these prophets and also mention the guidance about this religion was given through these prophets to their followers. The definite article *الدين* on *الكتاب* is of the same category as the one on *الكتاب*. Just as the word *الكتاب* means “the Book of God”, the word *الدين* means “the religion of God”. The religion of God has always been Islam as is mentioned in the following verse: *إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامَ* (3:19) (the real religion before God is Islam, (3:19)). The foundation of this religion is the pure and complete concept of monotheism. It was this religion which the Almighty gave to Noah (sws) – in fact to Adam (sws),<sup>14</sup> and it was this very religion which was revealed to Muḥammad (sws). Its beliefs and foundations are the same from the beginning to the end. If there is any difference it is in the corollaries of the *sharī‘ah* which the Qur’ān terms as *شُرْعَةٌ وَمِنْهَا جَا*.

The *ummahs* have been directed to establish this religion and not create differences in it. This directives is similar to what is given in the verse: *وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا* (3:103) (and together cling to the rope of God and let nothing divide you, (3:113)). To establish religion means to

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14. The actual history of the prophets of God begin with Adam (sws); however, the Qur’ān generally begins it with Noah (sws). The reason for this is that history prior to Noah (sws) is completely in the dark.

sincerely believe in tenets which are meant to be believed in and to honestly and righteously follow its practical directives; moreover, people should be continuously watched over lest they should become negligent or indifferent to it and it should be fully taken care of that innovators are not able to create any inroads in it.

The expression لَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا refers to the fact that this religion is the rope of God; hence it is the obligation of every person to hold steadfast to it; it should not be the case that people regard whatever rope that comes into their hands to be the rope of God and let go of the real rope. If one's relation with this rope of God is broken, then the binding thread will be torn apart. Then nothing will be able to bind people.

In كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ the word الْمُشْرِكِينَ refers to the Idolaters of the Quraysh. It is stated that the Almighty revealed for them the same religion which He revealed to all prophets and this same religion was preached by their great ancestor Abraham (sws); however, what the Prophet (sws) is calling them to is weighing heavily on them.

Though the words used in مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ are general, yet contextual indications show that they relate to monotheism. It is specified at a number of places in the Qur'ān that the greatest aversion which the Idolaters had was to the call of monotheism given by to them by the Qur'ān.

The words اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and ask him to show patience with regard to these Idolaters; however much he may be desirous of their faith, it is God's will which shall prevail and God's will is governed by His wisdom and established practice. He guides only those to Himself who themselves turn to Him for guidance. Those who do not do so are deprived of the urge to gain more guidance. The preposition إِلَيْ after يَجْتَبِي shows that a *taḍmīn* occurs here. This style has been explained at many places in this *tafsīr*.

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْثًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى لَفُضِّي بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ<sup>15</sup>

The afore-mentioned *ummahs* of the prophets are rebuked in this verse: even after being blessed with the light of divine knowledge they differed with each other merely because of stubbornness, and were led into error.

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15. And these people divided themselves merely because of mutual obduracy only after true knowledge had come to them. And had not a thing been ascertained by God till an appointed term, He would have immediately decided among them. And those have been made the inheritors of the Book after them are inflicted with a baffling doubt.

If someone slips and falls in the darkness of night, he can be forgiven to some extent; however, if someone slips in broad daylight merely because of stubbornness, then he himself is responsible for his foolishness. To understand the nature of these differences referred to in the verse, it would perhaps be sufficient to say that the differences which arose between the scholars and jurists of the Jews are the same as the one which have arisen between us Muslims. The only difference is that this *ummah* has the Qur'ān preserved with it. Hence it has a scale to judge between these differences; however, the Jews lost the Torah and for this reason nothing remained which could resolve their differences.

From the very beginning an atmosphere of altercation prevailed between the *ummah* constituted by Jesus (sws) and the Jews, and the real cause of this was the enmity shown by the scholars of the Jews. Merely because of stubbornness and jealousy they became the enemies of the followers of Jesus (sws). Later the Christians too became divided into many sects and Saint Paul deprived them of the light of both the Torah and Gospel. After that when the Almighty wanted to show them the light of the Qur'ān, the Jews, the Christians and the Quraysh tried to violently put it out – a description of which our readers have been studying in the Qur'ān. The reason for the enmity of Jews with the Qur'ān was that they did not want the reins of religious leadership to be transferred to the Israelites, and the reasons because of which the Quraysh were hostile to the Prophet (sws) are evident from these *sūrahs*. This situation has been expressed by the Qur'ān by the words: وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ which means that whichever *ummah* adopted the way of creating disputes and differences did so because of its own misdeeds and mutual enmity. As far as the God and His Messenger are concerned, they continued to guide people to the straight path.

The words وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ sound a warning to these *ummahs* and an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that since His Lord has decided that each *ummah* will be given a certain respite until the truth is conclusively conveyed to it, hence they are being given this time; had this not been the case, the matter would have been decided between them without any delay.

The section of the verse وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَنْ يَشْكُ مِنْهُ مُّرِبٌ is related to the sentence وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ. The sentence in between is parenthetical in nature and is meant for admonishment. In other words, when these *ummahs* differed with each other after knowledge had come to them from God, the result was that people who later became the recipients of the Torah were afflicted with nagging doubts by the Torah. This topic has been discussed in the

following words in the previous *sūrah*: وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاحْتُلِفَ فِيهِ (and We gave the Book to Moses; then differences were created in it; had not a decision between made by your Lord, their dispute would have been settled, and in indeed they are afflicted from it with a baffling doubt, (41:45)). Linguistic research on the word مُرِيب has been presented at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. The words الَّذِينَ أَوْرَثُوا الْكِتَابَ refer to the difference of the Jews who became the recipients of the Torah after their ancestors. Since they received the Torah full of discrepancies, it was but natural for them to be afflicted with perplexing doubts, and this situation entailed that they should have given due value and importance to the Qur'ān which could resolve these discrepancies. However, they opposed it out of sheer obstinacy and envy. Generally people have interpreted the word الْكِتَابَ of the above quoted expression to refer to the Qur'ān; however, there is no contextual indication to support this.

فَلِذَلِكَ فَادْعُ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ<sup>16</sup>

In this verse, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is directed to call people to this very religion of truth which is the common religion of all the prophets of God; however much his enemies oppose him, he should pay absolutely no attention to them; and strongly adhere to what he has been told.

The words وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ explain in a negative way the perseverance the Prophet (sws) must show: he must not follow their base desires. This implies that he should not follow the religious innovations they have fabricated in order to make their desires part of religion. The word أَهْوَاءَ refers to religious innovations, as is explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr* refers to. This because these innovations spring from desires.

The expression وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ refers to the fact that the Prophet (sws) should tell those people who are fighting with him in support of their religious innovations that he has professed faith in the Book of God; so how can he follow their innovations and desires?

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16. Therefore call people to this religion and adhere to it the way you have been direct to and do not follow their desires. And declare: "Whatever Book has revealed, I profess faith in it and I have been directed to judge between you. God alone is our Lord and your Lord. Our deeds are for us and your deeds for you; no argument is needed among us. God will bring us all together and to Him all shall return."

The words وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ imply that the Prophet (sws) has not come to follow their innovations and desires; he has come to judge between them with justice; they have created disputes and differences in the religion of God, and he has been directed to judge these differences and tell them what is right and what is wrong; so they should not expect him to follow their innovations and if they have the urge to know then they should try to ask him how much truth is there in these innovations and how much falsehood, and what is the true unadulterated religion of God.

The words اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ are meant to admonish and warn them through the tongue of the Prophet (sws): they should remember that it is God Who is the Lord of the believers and it is He Who is the Lord of the disbelievers; both factions will come to His presence one day; they should not erroneously believe that their Lord will be someone else than God; they should also remember that both factions will be responsible for their own deeds; if the believers have communicated the truth to the disbelievers, then they have fulfilled their responsibility and are not liable for them before God; the disbelievers will themselves bear the good or bad consequences of their attitude. This topic is also discussed in the following verses of Sūrah Yūnus: وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ: وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ: أَنْتُمْ بَرِيئُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٠: ٤١) (if they refute you, tell them: “to me my deeds and to you yours; you are free from responsibility for what I do and I am free from yours,” (10:41)).

The words لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ imply that if even after this debate, discussion and explanation they are not being able to understand the reality, then there is no need to extend conversation; the matter now rests with God – He will gather all and judge between them, and they should remember that the final abode of everyone is with Him.

وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ<sup>17</sup> (١٦)

The word محاجة means to dispute and to engage in silly arguments, and in the mudāf is suppressed ie. فِي تَوْحِيدِ اللَّهِ because the dispute did not relate to God but to His oneness (tawhīd). Not even the Idolaters refuted God what to speak of the People of the Book; however, to believe in God while ascribing partners to Him is not acceptable in religion; it is essential to believe in Him while regarding Him to be the

17. As for those who argue about God after He has been acknowledged, their arguments will have no weight with their Lord, and wrath is on them and for them is a grievous punishment.

one and only God; if someone disputes in the matter of His oneness, then it is as if He is disputing about God and actually negating Him.

The meaning of the expression *مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ* is almost the same as *مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ*. In other words, this dispute has arisen after believing in God. Obviously, when the teaching of all prophets from Noah (sws) to Jesus (sws) has been the same – all of them calling people to the oneness of God – then this only means that the ancestors of the Quraysh, the Jews and the Christians have accepted the oneness of God. If after this acknowledgement from them, their followers are raising these disputes, then this is not argumentation – this is silly argumentation. Such silly argumentation is not going to avail them before God and is destined to be routed.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ<sup>18</sup> (١٧)

The word *الْكِتَابَ* refers to the Qur'ān and the word *الْمِيزَانَ* is an elucidation of this word. The verse states that in order resolve the mutual disputes of the followers of these prophets and to distinguish good from evil, the Qur'ān was revealed by the Almighty as a scale of justice. Earlier, in verse fifteen, it had been declared from the tongue of the Prophet (sws): *وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ* (And declare: “whatever Book has revealed, I profess faith in it and I have been directed to judge between you.) The verse under discussion states this proclamation from another aspect. It is obvious that when the Almighty deputed the Prophet (sws) to decide the differences between the followers of other prophets, it was essential that a true book be given to him which may act as a scale of justice, and he can tell people by weighing this scale how much truth they have and how much falsehood. It is because of this very feature of the Qur'ān that it is also called *muhaymin* which means a scale and a barometer. In Sūrah Ḥadīd, this topic is expressed in the following words: *وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ* (and with them revealed the Book and the Scale so that people adhere to justice, (57: 25)).

The sentence *وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ* is very eloquent and comprehensive. The implication is that fortunate are the people who will distinguish between good and evil and resolve their differences in accordance with the judgment made by this scale of justice. Otherwise, the Day of Judgement will in any case decide their matter and no one will be able to run away from this decision; they should not regard the Day of

18. It is God who has revealed the Book with decisive truth and the scale and who knows the Hour of Doom may be fast approaching.



Judgement to be far off; it may well be near; where will those people run from the scale of justice of the Day of Judgement who are evading the scale of justice of the Qur'ān.

يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ أَلَا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ (١٨)<sup>19</sup>

These people think that the Day of Judgement is merely a bluff; for this reason, they are showing indifference to it; in fact, they obdurately remark: If it is to come, why is it not coming? The verse says that those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement seek hasten its arrival; it is as if it is merely a matter of jest for them; however, those who believe in it, understand its horrific nature and fear and dread it.

The sentence إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ expresses sorrow at the state of deprivation of these people who are disputing such an obvious reality as the Day of Judgement. It is said that these people have strayed far into error. Their eyes will open when it shall be of no avail to them; each person will then encounter his fate and will not be able to escape from it.

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ (١٩)<sup>20</sup>

This verse states the reason why the Almighty gives so much time to the defiant and the mischief-mongers so that they become audacious enough to demand the hastening of punishment and the Day of Judgement. It is said that God is very merciful to His servants, and takes the initiative in being merciful; He is not in a hurry to punish people; in spite of the defiance of the defiant, He keeps providing them with the provisions of life. This is because if they want they can benefit from this respite and mend their ways and thereby become worthy of their Lord's eternal mercy.

The second reason for this is that God is very powerful and mighty, as is referred to by the words: وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ. No one has the power to evade His grasp; so when no one is beyond His grasp nor can anyone ever be, why should God show haste. Hastiness is needed by one who fears that the prey might escape his grasp.

19. Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, and those who believe in it dread it and know it is certain to come. Beware! Those who dispute about the Hour of doom have strayed far into error.

20. Merciful is God towards His servants. He blesses with sustenance to whomsoever He desires and is very powerful and mighty.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ (٢٠)<sup>21</sup>

This is a further explanation of the established practice of God referred to earlier: it is not God's way of providing only those Who worship Him; He provides both the virtuous and the wicked; however, those who strive for harvest in the Hereafter, God blesses their harvest of the Hereafter and also provides them as much as He wants to in this world from His favour and blessings. As for those who are after this worldly life only and are heedless of the Hereafter, He provides them in this world as much as His wisdom entails but they will have no share in the Hereafter.

The words مَنْ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْ are suppressed after حَرْثِهِ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ as per textual indications. Parallelism testifies to this suppression because the words نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا are present in the parallel clause. In Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, this subject is discussed in the following words:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا كَلَّا تُمِدُّ هَؤُلَاءَ وَهَؤُلَاءَ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مُحْظُورًا (١٧: ١٨-٢٠)

Whoever should desire worldly pleasures, We provide in this world what they want and for whom We want. Then We have prepared for them Hell, which they will enter, censured and banished. And whoever desire the Hereafter and exert the effort worthy for it and they are believers also, then they are the ones whose effort is ever appreciated [by God]. With the blessing of your Lord We help them also and these also, and the door of your Lord's blessings does not close on anyone. (20:18-20)

### Section III: Verses (21-36)

It is evident from the previous section of verses that all the prophets and

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21. And whoever seeks the harvest of the world to come, We increase his harvest and [also give his share to him from this world also] and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We grant him a share of it but in the world to come he shall have no share at all.

messengers of God have preached this religion of monotheism which is being preached by Muḥammad (sws). Now in the succeeding verses, it is being said that if the alleged deities of these Idolaters have fabricated some other religion for them, then this religion will not be of any avail to them before God; on the Day of Judgement, such people will feel remorse and sorrow for what they did; on that day, only those people will succeed on who will earn for it by professing faith and doing righteous deeds.

After that, three objections of the opponents of the Prophet (sws) are answered one after the other.

Firstly, the objection that if the Prophet (sws) is diligently and passionately calling them to this religion, then it is not because their welfare is dear to him; it is because of a purely personal motive.

Secondly, the objection that whatever discourse the Prophet (sws) is presenting is concocted by him; but to strike his awe in their hearts, he is ascribing it to God.

Thirdly, the objection that if these people are worthy of punishment because of straying into error, why are their circumstances better than those of the Prophet (sws) and of his companions, and why does not the punishment with which they are being threatened with come?

Readers may study the succeeding verses in the light of this background.

### Text and Translation

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنَ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُتِنَ بِهِمْ  
وَأِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢١) تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ  
الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ (٢٢) ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ قُلْ لَا  
أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٢٣) أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِنْ يَشَأِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ وَيَمْحُ  
اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٢٤) وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ  
عَن عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٢٥) وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا  
الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ وَالْكَافِرُونَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ (٢٦) وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ  
لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَكِن يُنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ (٢٧) وَهُوَ  
الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِّن بَعْدٍ مَّا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٨) وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ

خَلَقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ (٢٩)  
 وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ (٣٠) وَمَا أَنْتُمْ  
 بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (٣١) وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ الْجَوَارِ  
 فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ (٣٢) إِنْ يَشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ  
 لَآيَاتٍ لِكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (٣٣) أَوْ يُوقِفُهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوا وَيَعْفُ عَنْ كَثِيرٍ (٣٤) وَيَعْلَمَ  
 الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ مَحِيصٍ (٣٥) فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ  
 الدُّنْيَا وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٣٦)

Have they some partners of God who have prescribed for them the religion which God has not allowed? And had the time of the decision not been determined, their matter would have been decided. And indeed for these wrongdoers is a painful doom. You shall behold the wrongdoers aghast on that day at the torment of their earning and it will surely smite them. However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds shall dwell in the orchards of Paradise. For them shall be from their Lord all that they desire. Surely this will be the greatest blessing. This is the thing whose glad tidings God is giving to those of His servants who embraced faith and did righteous deeds. Say: "For this I demand of you no recompense; I am only fulfilling my obligation towards my close relationships." And if any person does a good deed, We shall increase its goodness. Indeed. God is very forgiving and bountiful in His rewards. (21-23)

Do they say: "He has framed a falsehood about God?" So if God desires, He can put a seal on your heart, and through His words, God obliterates evil and bolsters the truth. Indeed, He knows the secrets of hearts and He alone accepts the repentance of His servants, and pardons their sins. And is aware of what you do. (24-25)

And those embraced faith and did righteous deeds accept and He will give them more through His bounty. As for these disbelievers, there is a grievous punishment for them. (26)

And had God bestowed abundant provisions upon His servants, they would have wreaked havoc in the land. But He sends down in a certain measure what He desires; He is aware of His servants and observes them, and He it is Who sends down the rain when people have lost all hope, and spreads His mercy. And He alone is the real accomplisher and has worthy attributes. (27-28)

And from among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and animals He has dispersed between them. And He is also powerful

enough to gather them whenever He wants to. (29)

And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is the fruit of your own deeds, and He forgives many of your sins. And neither can you escape in the earth from God's grasp [nor in the heavens] and there will be none besides God who can be your accomplisher or helper. (30-31)

And among His signs are the ships which sail like mountains on the seas, and if He wants He can stop the wind so that they stand stationery on the sea level. Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who shows perseverance and gratitude. Or He destroys them because of their misdeeds and forgives many and so that those who are indulging in baseless arguments about Our revelations come to know that there is no place for them to escape. (32-35)

Thus whatever has been given to you is a trivial provision of this life, and whatever is with God is better and more enduring for those who embraced faith and put their trust in God. (36)

### Explanation

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنَ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ<sup>22</sup> (٢١)

The particle أَمْ here is to express istinkaar and wonder. The implication is that the religion of God which He sent with all His prophets and messengers is the one which is mentioned above; so from where has this new religion arrived? Do they have some associates who have fabricated a religion for them which was not permitted by God. In other words, without the permission of God, no religion can be classified as the religion of God, so where has this religion come from? If they have some associates, then God has no associates. It is merely a baseless notion that they have.

What is expressed in وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ is already mentioned in verse fourteen above. These words sound a threat to them that had not the Almighty fixed a time to decide their fate, they would have been destroyed right away in this very world; the respite they have been given should not induce them to arrogance; in fact, they should show gratitude to God that He is not seizing them immediately. If they do not benefit from this time, then they should remember that for such wrong-doers there is a painful torment. The word ظَالِمِينَ refers to the Idolaters who had left the religion of

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22. Have they some partners of God who have prescribed for them the religion which God has not allowed? And had the time of the decision not been determined, their matter would have been decided. And indeed for these wrongdoers is a painful doom.

God and had invented the new religion of polytheism and in this way were responsible for wronging their souls by their own hands.

تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَهُمْ وَقِعَ بِهِمْ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ<sup>23</sup>

The verse implies that today these Idolaters have no fear of the Hereafter on the basis of their alleged deities; they think that in case the Hereafter comes, their deities will help them; they need not worry; however, when the Hereafter comes, they will see that at that time there is no one to intercede or help them; every person will face his deeds; people will fear the consequences of these deeds but this fear at that time will be of no avail. They will definitely face the punishment of their deeds and no scheming of theirs will help them out from it.

The next part of the verse beginning from *وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* says that those who led their lives having faith and doing good deeds instead of depending on their deities will find themselves in orchards of Paradise. For them, from God will be everything which they want.

In the expression *رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ*, the word *رَوْضَاتِ* refers to the supplementary orchards and lawns which will be found in the vast Paradise of God for the entertainment of the dwellers of Paradise. Since there will be more than one orchard and more than one Paradise, both words in Arabic occur in the plural.

In order to understand the true stress of the words *الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ* readers may take a look at verse twenty above. It is said there that the slaves of this word regard their pleasures and indulgences to be very great; the fact of the matter is that the real blessing which people should be after is the one which God will grant His servants on the Day of Judgement.

ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ<sup>24</sup>

23. You shall behold the wrongdoers aghast on that day at the torment of their earning and it will surely smite them. However, those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds shall dwell in the orchards of Paradise. For them shall be from their Lord all that they desire. Surely this will be the greatest blessing.

24. This is the thing whose glad tidings God is giving to those of His servants who embraced faith and did righteous deeds. Say: "For this I demand of you no recompense; I am only fulfilling my obligation towards my close relationships." And if any person does a good deed, We shall increase its

This verse explains the great blessing referred to in the previous verse: since the Almighty is giving the believers the glad tidings of an eternal kingdom, they should expend their effort to achieve it and should leave those people alone to themselves who have become slaves to the paltry pleasures of this world.

The exception in *إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ* in my opinion is severed (*munqati‘*) and the word *قُرْبَىٰ* is a verbal noun the way *زُلْفَىٰ* and *بُشْرَىٰ* are and which have the same grammatical form (*wazan*).

The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should inform the megalomaniac leaders of the Quraysh that in spite of all their apathy, aversion and harassment if he is diligently presenting his message to them, then they should not think that he has some personal gain in this endeavour. How can he for whom the Almighty has given such glad tidings of a great blessing— as mentioned in the previous verse – need any reward from them? All his endeavours and anxieties are because he wants to fulfill the obligation which is imposed on him as a result of being part of a clan and tribe and by virtue of which he is related to them; they are members of his family and nation; hence it is his obligation towards them that the guidance he has brought from God be first delivered to them and the mercy he is proclaiming for all should first of all be extended to them by his efforts.

It may be kept in mind that it has always remained the established practice of the prophets of God that they begin their preaching by first addressing the members of their respective tribes and nations and until they lost hope from them, they do not direct their attention to others. It was a result of this practice that the Prophet (sws) was initially directed by the words: (وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (٢٦: ٢١٤) (and inform your near of kin, (26:214)). It was his close relatives among the Quraysh who were the political and religious leaders of Arabia. The Prophet (sws) began his preaching mission by sounding a warning to them about the Hereafter, and in spite of all their excesses continued with this task until they made him lose hope because of their stubbornness. When the situation reached the extent that they started to conspire to kill him, it is then when the Almighty directed him to migrate from them to Madīnah.

My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī views this verse differently. He is of the opinion that the exception is in the meaning of emendation (*istidrāk*) and interprets this verse in the light of the following verse of Sūrah Sabā’: (قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ (٣٤: ٤٧) (Tell them: “If I have demanded any reward from you, then it is for you; my

reward rests with God, (34:47)). In his opinion, the meaning is that if the Prophet (sws) is calling them to fulfill the rights imposed by blood relationships and to spend in way of God, then it is not because he has some selfish motive behind it; it is for their own benefit of this world and the next; this wealth shall be taken from their affluent and distributed among their poor, and in this manner, he is showing them the way of how to care for close relatives; there is no personal benefit for him in this.

It may be kept in mind that the Prophet (sws) did not allow himself or his relatives to benefit from the *zakāh* money in any way so that no chance remains of making evil estimations.

Both these interpretations are not very different from one another. This is because a severed exception and emendation are very similar in nature; however, there is some difference between the two. Although I am convinced of my own interpretation, I do not regard my mentor's interpretation to be incorrect.

In my opinion, the correct interpretation of the verse is the one which is stated in the afore-mentioned paragraphs. Generally, people have interpreted this verse to mean that the Prophet is stating: "I do not need any reward from you; I only want that you deal kindly with me on the basis of the close familial relationship between me and you." The weakness of this interpretation is obvious; to ask for being dealt with kindly is no less than asking for a type of reward, and in Sūrah Shu'arā' it is unanimously stated from the tongue of all the Prophets of God like Noah (sws), Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lot (sws) and Shu'ayb: وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٩: ٢٦) (I do not ask any reward from you for anything; my reward rests with God alone, (26:109)). No prophet has appealed to his respective nation to be dealt with kindly in return for his preaching because the whole dispute was about this preaching; so when a prophet did not have the liberty to strike a compromise in it, what is the meaning of appealing to the adversaries for kind treatment. The animosity of the Quraysh with the Prophet (sws) was because of his preaching; they were ready to fulfill every desire of his and obey every directive of his if the Prophet (sws) would desist from his preaching of *tawḥīd*. However, the Prophet (sws) openly declared that he will not desist from this effort. After this, when the attitude of the Quraysh became even from stern, the Prophet (sws) instead of requesting them to treat him kindly, openly told them that whatever they want to do they should carry on with it; if he is given as much gold as the mountain of Uḥud, he will not desist from his preaching.

Some misled sects have interpreted this verse to mean: "The only reward I ask you is to love my relatives." This interpretation is totally



against the words of the verse, some other verses as well as sense and reason. Once the true interpretation of the verse has become evident, this interpretation does not need any refutation. Those who are its proponents perhaps do not remember that this verse belongs to the Makkan period when most of the Prophet's near relatives were after his life; so what is the point in appealing to people to love them.

The words وَمَنْ يَفْتَرْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ imply that the Prophet (sws) should inform these people that their piety and virtue is no benefit to God so that if they do not serve and worship Him, then something will go wrong in His kingdom; on the contrary, their piety and virtue will only benefit them because whatever small or big good deed they do, God will increase and reinforce it, and they will receive its reward in the form of an eternal kingdom. God is ever disposed to forgiving and has great regard for good deeds; He will not ignore the most minutest of good deeds; in fact, He will increase it by nurturing and bestow it on His servants in the form of great reward.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِنْ يَشَأْ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ<sup>25</sup> (٢٤)

The verse implies that if they have worked up this mischief against this scale of justice – ie Qur'ān – that it has been fabricated by the Prophet (sws) and that only to over-awe people he has ascribed it to God, then this should be enough to satisfy him that he has received the Qur'ān neither of his own desire nor can he receive it of his own desire; it is the Almighty Who has bestowed him with this fountain of graciousness, and whenever He wants He can stop its flow. This topic is mentioned in Sūrah Banī Isra'īl in the following words:

وَلَيْنَ شَيْئًا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهِ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيلًا إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيرًا (١٧: ٨٦-٨٧)

If it were Our Will, We could take away that which We have sent to you as revelation. Then you will not be able to make anyone help you against Us in returning it. This is merely a blessing of your Lord to you. Indeed great is His mercy on you. (17:86-87)

25. Do they say: "He has framed a falsehood about God?" So if God desires, He can put a seal on your heart, and through His words, God obliterates evil and bolsters the truth. Indeed, He knows the secrets of hearts.

In the section *وَيَمْنَحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ* the sentence is of the nature of an is accusative of state, and the word *يَمْنَحُ* is not co-ordinated to *يُحِقُّ*; it is an independent sentence. And it is in fact *يَمْنَحُو* from which a *و* has been dropped the way it is in the expressions: *وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ* (٧١:١١) and *سَدَّغُ الرَّبَّانِيَّةِ* (١٨:٩٦).

This section of the verse is in fact another aspect of what is said previously: do those who regard the Qur'ān to be a fabrication of Muḥammad (sws) not see the effect that how God through His words is obliterating evil and affirming the truth. Fabrication is always from Satan, and Satan is not one who obliterates evil and reinforces the truth; in fact, he does the absolute reverse. Jesus (sws) too, in very similar words, has responded to the objection of those people who blamed him by saying: "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons," (Matthew, 12:24)). His reply was: "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?" (Matthew, 12:26)). The same thing is said in this verse: if the Qur'ān is a fabrication, and its presenter is a fabricator then the consequence of this should not be that falsehood should perish and evil should thrive; it should have been totally opposite. Has a fabricator ever presented a discourse as beneficial and as radiant for the souls and hearts as the Qur'ān?

The words *إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ* are a warning to those people who were regarding the Qur'ān to be a fabrication and the Prophet (sws) to be a fabricator. It is obvious that those who had worked this mischief fully knew that neither is the Qur'ān a fabrication nor is its presenter a fabricator; they were also fully aware of the loftiness of the Qur'ān as well as of the lofty character of the Prophet (sws). They fully comprehended that the Qur'ān is true and its presenter as an unblemished individual; however, since they did not want to accept the Qur'ān as the Book of God and Muḥammad (sws) as the Messenger of God, they would spread such false and baseless propaganda. It is while referring to this state of their that they are threatened that God fully knows the secrets of their hearts; He is aware what is in their hearts and what they say from their tongues.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٢٥)<sup>26</sup>

These words urge these people to repent and mend their ways: they still have the opportunity to save themselves from the wrath of God if they do so. God is ever-merciful and forgoes the sins of His servants. If they do not pay heed to this call, they should remember that whatever they do is in

26. And He alone accepts the repentance of His servants, and pardons their sins. And is aware of what you do.

His knowledge; they will not be able to hide any of their sins from Him.

وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِّن فَضْلِهِ وَالْكَافِرُونَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ

شَدِيدٌ<sup>27</sup> (٢٦)

The attitude of the believers and their fate is depicted in this verse: the way they responded to this call and as a result of which they will be blessed with more favours in this world and the next, in the same way, if these people want, they can become worthy of these favours otherwise they should remember that God has prepared a painful torment for the disbelievers. The words الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا are not in the place of an object (*maf'ūl*); they are in the place of a subject (*fā'il*). At another place, the words are: إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ وَالْمَوْتَى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ (٣٦: ٦) (only they will accept it who really lend ear; as for those whose hearts are dead, God will raise them ..., (6:36)).

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَكِن يُنْزِلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ

بَصِيرٌ<sup>28</sup> (٢٧)

The verse implies that if their worldly affluence and riches have led them to believe that they are on the right path, and as a result have been inflicted with such arrogance that they are not properly responding to the calls of the Prophet (sws) and his not well-off companions, then they are merely deceiving their own selves. Worldly affluence is not a testimony to a person being on the right path. Such things are meant to try and test people, and it is God who gives both believers and disbelievers this affluence as per His wisdom and expedience, and in this manner tries them both. All this is in the authority of God. He is fully aware of the circumstances and expedient needs of His servants. For this reason, He constricts these riches to whomsoever He wants and gives them in abundance to whomsoever He wants and in this manner tests them if they remain patient and grateful. Had He intended, He could have blessed each person with abundance of riches so that they could benefit from them at will; however, such a situation would have become a great

27. And those embraced faith and did righteous deeds accept and He will give them more through His bounty. As for these disbelievers, there is a grievous punishment for them.

28. And had God bestowed abundant provisions upon His servants, they would have wreaked havoc in the land. But He sends down in a certain measure what He desires; He is aware of His servants and observes them,

trial for people. They would have taken the path of rebellion while being inebriated with this affluence. To save people from such a trial, the Almighty has kept the whole matter in His own hands. He gives to people whatever livelihood and sustenance He wants to in accordance with His wisdom. Thus if a person is given in abundance, he should not out of arrogance think that this is the result of his own planning and ability or the share of his forefathers; he should remain grateful to God in Whose authority is to give and also to take away after giving.

This subject is discussed in more detail in the succeeding *sūrah*: Sūrah Zukhruf which is the counterpart of this *sūrah*:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقُرَيْتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ أَهْمُ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحِمْتَ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ وَلَوْلَا أَن يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ لِيُوبِتَهُمْ سُقْفًا مِّن فَضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ وَلِيُوبِتَهُمْ أَنْبَاءًا وَسُرْرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَكَبَّرُونَ وَزُخْرَفًا وَإِنْ كُلٌّ ذَلِكٌ لَّمَّا مَتَاعٌ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٣: ٣١-٣٥)

And they ask: “Why was this Qur’ān not revealed to some big leader of the two cities – Makkah or Tā’if?” Is it they who apportion your Lord’s blessings? We have allocated among them their livelihood in this world and have raised some in status above others so that they can mutually serve each other. And better is your Lord’s mercy than what they are amassing. Had it not been for the fact that people might have adopted one path, We would have made the house roofs of those who have rejected the Most Gracious Lord of silver and their stairways also which they climb and also their doors and their couches on which they recline. And We could have made these into gold as well. And these things are only provisions of the few days of this worldly life and the success in the life to come is reserved by your Lord for the virtuous. (43:33-35).

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٨)

This is a substantiation of what is said above that God sends down

29. And He it is Who sends down the rain when people have lost all hope, and spreads His mercy. And He alone is the real accomplisher and has worthy attributes.

sustenance for His servants in a measure; neither do His servants have a say in this nor their alleged deities. The verse states that it is God Who sends down rain after people totally lose hope. Rain is specially mentioned because livelihood totally depends on it. The words *مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا* are meant to highlight the reality that all those who are very proud of their planning, of their deities and intercessors as well as their means and resources and think that they deserve what they have are fully aware of the fact sending down rain from the blocked crevices of the sky is only in the hands of the Almighty. In other words, God shows this majesty of His from time to time so that no one should become arrogant enough to claim that sustenance is the right of someone or that someone other than God is a source of it.

The words *وَهُوَ الْوَكِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ* summarize the whole subject under discussion: this every day observation shows that the real accomplisher is God and He is *الْحَمِيدُ* ie is also worthy of all good attributes and the fountainhead of all praises and gratitude. He does not deprive in these few days of worldly life people who thrive on his sustenance and even challenge Him.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ (٢٩)<sup>30</sup>

The verse implies that no one should remain in the misconception that the threat of the Day of Judgement is a bluff; the God Who has created the heavens and the earth is even more capable of recreating man. At another place, this subject is discussed thus: (٢٧: ٧٩) *أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ بَنَاهَا* (is creating you more difficult or the sky which was raised aloft, (79:27)).

The word *دَابَّةٍ* is used for living beings which inhabit the earth; for this reason, a question may arise in the mind: there may be some creatures in the sky also on which this word is applicable; if this is not so, why is the dual antecedent used in the word *فِيهِمَا*. The answer to this question is that just as the word *سَمَاء* is used for the sky, it is also used for the atmosphere in which birds fly.

The contrasting use of the words *بَثَّ* and *جَمَعَ* here bespeaks of eloquence and is also a very effective argument of the Day of Judgement. The former means “to scatter” and “to spread” and the latter “to gather” and “to bring together”. It is evident from this that He Who has scattered all these living

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30. And from among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and animals He has dispersed between them. And He is also powerful enough to gather them whenever He wants to.

beings in the heavens and the earth is powerful enough to gather them whenever He wants to. When He has the power to scatter them, why will He not have the power to gather them. Every farmer who sows seeds in his land does not scatter seeds in it to waste them; he gathers their produce one day and for this he is least burdened.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ (٣٠) وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (٣١)<sup>31</sup>

These verses quell from another angle the doubt raised above. It is said that people can experience God's law of reward and punishment in their daily lives. Whatever sorrows people are afflicted with in this world are because of their own deeds even though God forgoes many of them. These sorrows afflict them to warn and remind them so that they should not regard this life to be a playground of kids and lead an indifferent life; these admonishing incidents should make them realize that the Creator of these incidents is one Who rewards and punishes and He will definitely gather them one day and hold them accountable; if today He is giving them respite, it is not because He is not concerned with their good and evil or that He has regarded their evil to be of the same status as good; the real reason is that He has appointed a day to mete out complete reward and punishment which is bound to come.

The word وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ in يَعْفُو is means "to overlook". It is used in this meaning at many instances in the Qur'ān.

The section وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ points to the fact that people see from their very eyes that when the Almighty sends a calamity on them, they are not able to escape from it nor does any of their helper or supporter able to support or defend them in any way. This is an evidence of the fact that in the heavens also on the Day of Judgement no deity or intercessor nor any helper or supporter will be able to protect them from the grasp of God.

Here, it must be understood, that the addressees are the disbelievers, who are inflicted with calamities in this world because of their deeds. It can be inferred from this that the Creator is One Who rewards and punishes. Hence, He will definitely bring about a day in which He will punish the disbeliever for those of their misdeeds which He is ignoring in

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31. And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is the fruit of your own deeds, and He forgives many of your sins. And neither can you escape in the earth from God's grasp [nor in the heavens] and there will be none besides God who can be your accomplicher or helper.

this world. This verse does not relate to the prophets of God, the truthful and the righteous. The calamities which they are inflicted with are not because of their deeds but to try and test them. The purpose is to test their patience, and this trial become a means of enhancing their status.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ الْجَوَارِ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَغْلَامِ (٣٢) إِنْ يَشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (٣٣) أَوْ يُوقِفُهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوا وَيَعْفُ عَنْ كَثِيرٍ (٣٤) وَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ حَاجٍ (٣٥)<sup>32</sup>

These verses present an example before those people who are deeply engrossed in their worldly success: they should consider this worldly life to be a sea voyage. It is the result of God's power and wisdom that ships as heavy as the mountains sail in the sea. Those who do not have an eye for the power and might of God think that there is no danger to the ship when they see it cruising about and think that how can there be any danger to it. The fact of the matter is that if God wants, He can stop the wind and these ships together leaving their passengers are stranded in the sea. He can even make these ships and their ships drown in the sea with no one to be able to save them. Though this parable relates to ships which have sails because till that time only such ships had been invented, however, this same parable can precisely relate to the modern day ships as well. Today the advancements of science have taught man how to harness steam, electricity and the atom which has increased his might a lot. However, even today every now and then we read about various sea ships drowning in the sea like tablets of aspirin dissolving in water or their machinery going out of order down so that their lifeless structure has to be dragged to the shore by other ships.

The words *إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ* refer to the lesson which is concealed in this parable. They say that those who are patient and grateful will find many a lesson in it. They are the ones who seriously reflect on the circumstances and incidents of this life and conclude from them that if a person is facing adverse circumstances, he should not despair and lose hope; on the contrary, he should show patience by trusting his Lord. Whatever happens in this world happens at the behest of God, and no act

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32. And among His signs are the ships which sail like mountains on the seas, and if He wants He can stop the wind so that they stand stationery on the sea level. Indeed, there are signs in this for every person who shows perseverance and gratitude. Or He destroys them because of their misdeeds and forgives many and so that those who are indulging in baseless arguments about Our revelations come to know that there is no place for them to escape.

of God is devoid of wisdom. Similarly, if a person encounters conducive circumstances, he should not show arrogance and conceit; on the contrary, he should continue to be grateful because whatever a person receives, he receives from God, and just as God has the power to give, He also has the power to take away. People who are not aware of this reality become arrogant when they receive favours and frustrated when they adverse circumstances befall them. They never become aware of the sweetness of faith. Further ahead in this *sūrah*, such people are mentioned in the following words: **وَأَنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرَحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ** (٤٨: ٤٢) (and when We bless man with Our favours, he becomes arrogant and if some calamity afflicts him because of his deeds, he becomes ungrateful, (42:48)).

The sentence **إِنْ يَشَأْ أَوْ يُوقِظْهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوا وَيَعْفُ عَنْ كَثِيرٍ** is co-ordinated to **نَ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ**. The sentence **يُسْكِنُ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلِلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ** is a parenthetical one and is meant to point to the objective of this parable. Once the parenthetical sentence ends, the discourse was completed by stating that just as God has the power to stop the wind and leave the ships static on the surface of the sea, He also has the power to drown its passengers because of their misdeeds, and if He wants He can forgo the sins of many of them and they come out of the whirlpool and are safely transported to the shore. He has the power to exercise any of these three options. Hence it is not right for any person in this world to become proud of his success. On the other hand, if he is successful, he should become grateful to God. And if he is faced with a calamity, he should regard it to be the consequence of some blemish of his and show patience and hope for the best from God.

The word **وَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّحِيصٍ** is in the accusative. For this reason, its co-ordinated sentence must be regarded as suppressed. Several examples of such suppression can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* and are coming up in the succeeding ones as well. For example, it is said in Sūrah Jāthiyah: **وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَشَجَرَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ** (٢٢: ٤٥) (and God has created the heavens and the earth with a purpose and so that each soul be recompensed according to what it did, (45:22)). On this principle, some appropriate causation will be considered to have been suppressed here. Thus the whole discourse would be something to the effect: so that God takes revenge from them and so that those who do hair-splitting regarding the revelations of God become aware of the reality that they have no place to run from God.

This topic is discussed in various styles in the Qur'ān. Here is an example from Sūrah Yūnus:



هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِم بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ  
وَفَرَحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ  
دَعَاُ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنْ أَنجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ فَلَمَّا أَنجَاهُمْ  
إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ مَتَاعَ  
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٣-٢٢)

He is the One Who enables you to travel through land and sea until when you board the ships, and they set sail with the favourable wind and they are engrossed, a violent wind overtakes them and waves surge towards them from all sides and they start thinking that they will now be destroyed. At that time, they call out to God making a promise to sincerely obey Him: If You deliver us from this destruction, We will be Your grateful servants. But when He delivers them, they become rebellious in the land with any right. O People the evil consequences of your rebellion will be coming upon you. Gain some benefit from fleeting provisions of this worldly life but ultimately you have to return to Us. Then We will let you know what you had been doing. (10:22-23)

فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ  
يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٣٦)<sup>33</sup>

Here at the end, the aforementioned discussion is summarized: these worldly riches and favours which they have been given are not something to feel proud and conceited of; they are provisions of this fleeting life. One day at last this life will end and so will its provisions. However, whatever lies in the Hereafter with God is better than these provisions and also eternal. It is reserved for those who embrace faith and repose their trust in God. The implication is that if they have the grit, they should be desirous of the Hereafter; why are they destroying their future by going after these paltry provisions.

The words *وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ* are specially worth noting. They point to the fact that for those people who are desirous of the eternal kingdom of the Hereafter, the real provision for their journey is trust in God. Unless a person, while relying on God and depending upon the reward of the

33. Thus whatever has been given to you is a trivial provision of this life, and whatever is with God is better and more enduring for those who embraced faith and put their trust in God.

Hereafter, has the courage to sever all those things from him which are an impediment to tread in the path of God he or anyone else cannot attain this kingdom.

#### Section IV: Verses (37-43)

In the succeeding verses, some more traits of the people, who are worthy of the aforementioned reward, are mentioned. It is evident from these traits that those Muslims who had become the target of all kinds of oppression from the arrogant Quraysh, so much so, were being compelled to leave their homes because of this oppression are in fact worthy of this reward. This *sūrah*, as is indicated earlier, was revealed very near the migration to Madīnah. For this reason, these traits are mentioned in a style which insinuates glad tidings of victory for the Muslims and which also gives certain important instructions regarding their obligations in the coming times. Thus, before migration they were told that till then, they were in the form of a dispersed lot; but now the Almighty is creating a situation in which they will be politically organized as a community; till then they were oppressed; but now the time is approaching when they will be able to acquire the force to defend themselves and would also be permitted to do so from God. These verses guide the Muslims about what they should do in these circumstances when they arise; however, this guidance is not in the garb of a directive; it is stated as an obvious consequence of faith and trust in God. In the light of this background, readers may proceed to study these verses.

#### Text and Translation

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ (٣٧) وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ (٣٨) وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ (٣٩) وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٠) وَلَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ (٤١) إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٤٢) وَلَمَن صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ الْأُمُورِ (٤٣)

And those who avoid grievous sins and lewd acts and forgive when angry and those who responded to the call of their Lord, were diligent in their prayer and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation and spend from the provisions We have given them. (37-38)

And those who take revenge only when excess is committed against them. And the reward of a sin is an act equal to it. But he who forgave and made amends, then his reward rests with God. God does not like the wrongdoers. And those who take revenge after being wronged incur no blame. Blame is on those who are unjust and are rebellious in the land without any right. It is these people for whom there is a woeful torment. (39-42)

And he who showed patience and forgave, then this is indeed from among lofty traits. (43)

### Explanation

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ (٣٧)<sup>34</sup>

The verse says that these people are not like ones who after receiving the favours of God resorted to oppression, lewdness, and rebelliousness. They are the ones who abstain from all sins related to usurping rights, lewdness, anger and revenge. The sarcasm this style holds for the opposite group does not need any mention. A little deliberation will show that here all sins have been comprehensively stated under three heads: *ithm*, *fahshā'* and *ghaḍab*. The first of these refers to sins which relate to usurpation of rights, oppression and injustice; the second of these refers to sins which relate to sex and base desires; the third of these comes into existence because of egotism, tyranny and arrogance and gives rise to rebelliousness and disorder, tyranny and coercion.

Here it is only mentioned that the greater manifestations of these sins be abstained from. There are two reasons for this: Firstly, man has been put into the trial of good and evil – which are two opposite phenomena. Hence, God does not require of him to live a sinless life; if he had been burdened with this obligation, it would have become unbearable for him. For this reason, God only wanted of him to abstain from bigger sins. If he keeps desisting from bigger sins, God will forgive his smaller ones. Secondly, the way a person can evade smaller sins is to abstain from bigger ones. If a person honestly keeps bigger trusts his conscience will never be happy to be dishonest in small things entrusted to him and bear the embarrassment of being called a dishonest person. Similarly, a person who protects himself from bigger sins will not like that he perpetrate smaller sins and ruin his reward. A person who desists from stealing gold coins will never be a stealer of pennies. If such an incident does take place, it would be inadvertent and not intentional. However,

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34. And those who avoid grievous sins and lewd acts and forgive when angry.

people who strain gnats often swallow camels.

The style of the words وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ indicates that as far as anger is concerned, such people do experience it because anger is a natural requisite of honour, integrity and self-esteem; however, they never lose control in this anger and become insane or exceed the bounds of God. They restrain themselves in this state and forgive those people who anger them yet because of different reasons deserve to be forgiven. Concealed in these words is an advice for the Muslims as well that even though the attitude of their enemies provokes their anger, yet it is better that they be ignored as for now until the truth is conclusively communicated to them. The succeeding verses will explain this aspect. The occurrence of the antecedent هُمْ here has lent emphasis in the sentence: although exercising such restraint is very difficult, yet very laudable are those people who patiently bear its brunt.

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (٣٨)<sup>35</sup>

Mentioned in this verse are the traits of the believers as a result of which those qualities have been engendered in them which are referred to in the previous verse. The verse states that they are the ones who have positively responded to the call of their Lord which reached them through His messenger. Like the arrogant among the Quraysh, they did not try to deny it. This quality of theirs is referred to in verse twenty six in the following words: وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ (and those who have embraced faith and did righteous deeds are accepting it and He will give them more through His bounty).

The words وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ refer to their acceptance of their call or, in other words, their foremost manifestation of faith ie. they are diligent in their prayer. I have referred to this reality of religion at a number of places in this *tafsīr* that the foremost practical manifestation of faith is the prayer. Not only is this so, other virtues too sprout from this and are nurtured through it. For this reason, he who was not diligent in the prayer, is as if he did not accept the call of faith. If he lays claim to faith, then this claim of his tantamount to self-deception.

Here, it needs to be kept in mind that the term أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ does not mean to merely offer the prayer; it also means to make arrangements for it. In other words, these people pray themselves and also make arrangements for others to pray. It is offering this prayer and making

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35. And those who responded to the call of their Lord, were diligent in their prayer and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation and spend from the provisions We have given them.

arrangements for it to be offered by the collectivity which is their real distinctive feature in this world. It is this prayer which teaches them how to serve their Lord in this world and how to become a united force in adhering to the religion prescribed by Him. Moreover, it is this prayer which stops them from evil (*munkar*) and lewdness (*fahshā'*). It is to this reality which the following Qur'ānic words allude to: إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (٤٥:٢٩) (the prayer deters [a person] from lewdness and evil, (29:45)). Here too there is a sarcasm found for the Quraysh: they ruined the prayer; but in spite of this claim to be the inheritors of the house built by Abraham (sws) which was actually built for the prayer and for making arrangement for the prayer.

Consider next the sentence: وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ. The word شُورَى is a verbal noun of the order of فِتْيَا. In my opinion the word أَمْر is used in the Arabic language in very broad meanings. The actual meaning implied at an instance is determined through the occasion and context. Here an indication is present that tells us that it is used in the meaning of “collectivity”. In other words, the political and collective system of the Muslims is not based on tyranny, egotism, tribal superiority, and racial vanity; on the contrary, it is based on the mutual consultation of the believers. The sarcasm this sentence holds for the collective and political system of the Quraysh does not need any elaboration because their collective system was totally based on tribal and racial bias. One of the big reasons for opposing Islam was that they saw in its penetration death for their system of *jāhiliyyah*. The Qur'ān here in this verse has on the one hand given glad tidings to the Muslims that the time has come to organize themselves as political collectivity and this political collectivity shall not be founded on tribal and racial bases but on mutual consultation. On the other hand, it has also tacitly conveyed to the leaders of the Quraysh that however much force they may expend in opposing Islam and the Muslims, yet through the very hands of these weak and oppressed Muslims that new system will be implanted by uprooting that old decrepit one.

Here space and occasion does not allow us to dwell deep into the characteristics and foundational principles of the *shūrā* system. I have already dealt in detail on this subject in one of the chapters of my book *Islāmī Riyāsat*<sup>36</sup> (The Islamic State). Those interested may look it up. However, one question is worthy of consideration here: as per the conventional style of the Qur'ān, *zakāh* or *infāq* (spending in the way of

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36. See: Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Islāmī Riyāsat* (Lahore: Dār al-tadhkīr, 2006), 23-48. (Translator's Note)

God) are mentioned after the prayer; however, here as against this conventional practice, *shūrā* is mentioned between the prayer and *infāq*. So what exactly is the importance of *shūrā* in accordance with which it is mentioned adjacent to the prayer?

In my opinion, the answer to this question is that the real spirit and form of the collective system of Islam is preserved in the prayer. It is in the prayer that Muslims are guided to stand as a united wall while worshipping the Almighty; it is in it that they are shown that the person who is the most knowledgeable and God-fearing among them who should lead them; similarly, the prayer highlights the fact that within the limits prescribed by God people must obey their leader without showing the slightest of hesitancy; it also bears witness to the fact that the *imām* (prayer leader) should not give any directive to people which is against the directive of God and His Prophet (sws); moreover, it also delineates that the most ordinary of followers has the right to correct the *imām* if he makes any mistake; so much so, even while praying if he commits the smallest of mistakes while offering the *rukū'* or prostration or doing the *qiyām* or reciting the Qur'ān, every person who prays behind him has the responsibility to correct him; at the same time, it is mandatory upon the *imām* to immediately correct himself if the correction is in accordance with the *sharī'ah*. In other words, the whole collective system is portrayed in the prayer and Muslims are shown to follow this example in their collective and political system. Similarly, in order to implement (iqamat) their religion they should organize themselves and should select the most capable and the most knowledgeable and God-fearing person among themselves to lead them. Likewise, in everything which is in accordance with their religion they must obey him, and if something which is against the conventions of the *sharī'ah*, they must inform him without caring for the reproaches of any reproacher and try to reform him.

It is this relationship between the prayer and our political system that the Qur'ān at this very moment in which Muslims were being organized as a collectivity guided them towards *shūrā*. By mentioning *shūrā* adjacent to the prayer on the one hand, it highlighted its status in religion; on the other hand, the nature of organizational set-up was also explained viz: what will be the nature of rights and obligations of the ruler and the ruled; how people will be eligible to become its members; what will be their duties towards their collective system and towards their fellow human beings and before whom will they really be accountable to.

It was because of this relationships between importance of *shūrā* and the prayer that in the times of the Prophet (sws) and the Rightly Guided Caliphate, its sessions were held in the mosque. About 'Umar (rta) narrative even report that he would announce the holding of a session of

*shūrā* by the words: الصلاة جامعة (Gather O members of *shūrā* for the prayer).<sup>37</sup> When the members of the *shūrā* would gather in the mosque, he offered two *rak'āt*. Obviously, when he would offer these *rak'āt*, the members of the *shūrā* too would must have offered it behind him. After the prayer and supplications, 'Umar (rta) would table the agenda and the members of the *shūrā* would give their opinions on it, and under the direction of the caliph tried to reach a consensus in their opinions.

This method is also very blessed not only to obtain God's guidance but also with regard to the preservation of the real spirit of the political set-up envisaged by Islam. However, in current times, Muslims have abandoned this *shūrā* system and adopted other systems while following the footsteps of other nations and have severed their relationship with the mosque in this regard. The consequence is that they have been deprived of the guidance of God and their reins are not in the hands of Satan and his agents. The brawls and scuffles which now take place in the parliament are worse than the ones that take place in the market place.

Consider next the portion: وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ. I have discussed the relationship of the prayer with *zakāh* or *infāq* at a number of places in this *tafsīr*. The first pillar of worshipping the Almighty is to pray to Him; the second pillar is to spend in His way from the sustenance He has blessed people with. The first of these cements a person's ties with His creator, and the second cements his ties with his fellow human beings, and on these two foundations stands the edifice of the *sharī'ah*.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ (٣٩)<sup>38</sup>

The words of verse thirty seven earlier were: وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ. The current verse is a type of emendation to it: in the first place, these believers forgo the incitements of their opponents and if ever they retaliate, they do so on a blatant excess committed against them. In other words, defence against an excess and avenging it is a right which every person has and he can use it; however, they do not use every thing to be an excuse to launch an offensive. On the contrary, if they avenge, they avenge a *بَغْيٍ* which refers to an open excess, injustice and rebelliousness of an opponent.

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٠)<sup>39</sup>

37. 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, vol. 7, 330, (no. 13364).

38. And those who take revenge only when excess is committed against them.

39. And the reward of a sin is an act equal to it. But he who forgave and made

Moreover, the revenge of the believers is commensurate with the harm committed against them and they do not retaliate with inequitably. Their revengeful measure is equal to the excess committed against them.

Any revengeful measure is not a sin; it is in fact *qiṣāṣ*. However, it is signified by the word *سَيِّئَةٌ* (evil) as per a linguistic style which has been explained at a number of places of this *tafsīr*: at times, words are used in the capacity of *mujānasah* (literally: similarity of species). *Mujānasah* may be defined as the use of the same verb or noun in reply to some statement such that in this second instance of usage it is not used in its original meaning but used in a different meaning to which the context readily testifies. Thus the revenge of a *سَيِّئَةٌ* (evil) is not *سَيِّئَةٌ* (evil) in the actual sense. The second usage of the word *سَيِّئَةٌ* occurs only to employ the same word. It would actually mean that the revenge of an evil is an act commensurate to it. Other examples in Arabic includes the expression. In the expression *دَنَّاهُمْ كَمَا دَانُوا* (We paid them back in the same coins), the words *كَمَا دَانُوا* obviously mean *كَمَا فَعَلُوا* but merely for the sake of *mujānasah* the words *كَمَا دَانُوا* are used instead of *كَمَا فَعَلُوا*.

It needs to be kept in mind that in the case of any revengeful measure too, it is not permissible that to do something which is forbidden in the *sharī'ah* in all forms.

The sentence *فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ* implies that no doubt every person who has been subjected to excesses and injustice has the right to take revenge commensurate to the harm inflicted upon him; however, a better attitude in this regard is to forgive and resolve the situation through reformatory measures. Though one has to sacrifice one's desires to adopt this attitude; however, this carries tremendous reward and the Almighty has taken it upon Himself to give it. It is evident from this that in general individual happenings it is more pleasing in the sight of God that reformatory procedure be adopted whether this may be done by both the parties involved or by requesting a third party intervention or if a third party itself takes the initiative in this regard.

The words *إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ* form a comprehensive admonition that God does not like people who are oppressive. In other words, if a person oppresses someone, he will earn God's anger and if a person answers the oppression of a person by a greater oppression, then he too will earn God's wrath. The desired attitude in the sight of God is that this oppression should be set right and reformatory steps be taken and if this is not to be, then revenge can be taken commensurate to the harm suffered.



وَلَمَنِ انتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّن سَبِيلٍ (٤١) إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٤٢)<sup>40</sup>

In the expression *ظُلْمِهِ* the verbal noun is inclined to its object the way it is in the following verse of Sūrah Rūm: (٣:٣١) *وَهُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ*

These verses answer those people who think that one of the requisites of religiosity is that one should continue to bear the atrocities of others and never take revenge; if someone takes revenge, then this is considered against religiosity and he is considered to be an equal sinner. The verse states that in such matters they are not to blame who took revenge after being oppressed; on the contrary, the blame rests on the oppressors who without any right show rebelliousness and arrogance in the land of God.

Consider next the expression: *بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ*. The Creator and Master of this world is God and these people have no share in its creation or organization; but still there demand is that no one should be disobedient to them. The Qur'ān says that they are the real criminals and for them is a painful punishment. If in response to them, the oppressed are forced to take some step, then they will not be held accountable for it; on the contrary, it will be the oppressors who will be accountable for it. Readers may look up my *tafsīr* of the twenty ninth verse of Sūrah Mā'idah for more details on this issue.

وَلَمَن صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (٤٣)<sup>41</sup>

This verse summarizes the whole discussion, and a number of things become evident from it:

Firstly, although a person has the right to avenge on equal footing the harm inflicted on him, it is more desirable in the sight of God that the person show patience and forgive the oppressor.

Secondly, only those people will be able to forgive who have the trait of patience in them; those who are devoid of it will not be able to proceed in this regard. Thus a person should inculcate the spirit of patience in himself.

Thirdly, this is the character of nobility and loftiness. Those whom imbibe it in themselves are noble and lofty people.

It needs to be kept in mind that Muslims are given these directions to

40. And those who take revenge after being wronged incur no blame. Blame is on those who are unjust and are rebellious in the land without any right. It is these people for whom there is a woeful torment.

41. And he who showed patience and forgave, then this is indeed from among lofty traits.

counter the circumstances they were facing from the Quraysh near the time of their migration to Madīnah. Till that time neither were the Muslims organized as a political force nor was the truth conclusively conveyed to the Quraysh. After migration, when Muslims became an organized polity and the truth was also conclusively conveyed to the Quraysh, Muslims as a collectivity were directed by God to totally sever all their relations with them and continue to wage war against them until they submit to the authority of Islam.

### Section V: Verses (44-50)

The succeeding verses relate to the subject raised in verse thirty six. The discourse in that verse had reached the stage that the life which the opponents of the Prophet (sws) have fallen to is temporary; the eternal treasures are for the believers who are leading their lives in such a way so as to reap the success of the Hereafter instead of the transient pleasures of this world. After that the traits of the believers are mentioned in a few verses so that the discourse relates to the actual situation, and it becomes evident to the Muslims of those times that these glad tidings are for them and it becomes clear to their opponents that people who at that time were subjected to oppression by them will soon end up being successful.

After that, in the verses now under discussion, the earlier discourse is taken up again and first the Prophet (sws) is assured that those who are now facing the law of God cannot be guided by anyone else; these people will only realize when its too late. After that, the opponents of the Prophet (sws) are sounded a reminder as a final warning: they still have a chance to mend their ways; if they waste this opportunity, they will have another one. At the same time, the real reason of the arrogance of these people is delineated that whatever a person receives, he receives with the grace of God; but man is ungrateful and the very favours God bestows on him are used by him to rebel against God.

Readers may not study the succeeding verses in the light of this background.

#### Text and Translation

وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِ وَتَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ لَمَّا رَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ إِلَىٰ مَرَدٍّ مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ (٤٤) وَتَرَاهُمْ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا خَاشِعِينَ مِنَ الذُّلِّ يَنْظُرُونَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ خَفِيٍّ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا إِنَّ

الظَّالِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ مُّقِيمٍ (٤٥) وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ (٤٦) اسْتَجِيبُوا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ مَّلْجَأٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ نَّكِيرٍ (٤٧) فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِظًا إِنْ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَحَرَّحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ (٤٨) لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنِئَاءً وَيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ (٤٩) أَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنَاءً وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ عَقِيمًا إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ (٥٠)

And he whom God leads astray has none to help him. You will see these wrongdoers that when they face the punishment, they will exclaim: "Is there a way that can lead us back again to the world?" And you shall see them brought before Hell such that they will be bend down in humiliation looking to one another with furtive glances. And the true believers will say: "The real losers are those who put themselves and their people to loss on the Day of Judgement." Beware! These wrongdoers shall surely suffer everlasting torment. And there they will have no helpers who will be able to help them against God. And he whom God leads astray has no way to go. (44-46)

And respond to the call of your Lord before that day arrives from God which cannot be put off. On that day, there will be no refuge for you nor shall you be able deny anything. (47)

If they pay no heed, then We have not sent you to be their keeper. Your only responsibility is to deliver. And when We bless man with some mercy of Ours, he rejoices in it; and if a calamity befalls him because of his deeds, he becomes ungrateful. (48)

To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He will. He gives daughters to whom He pleases and sons to whom He pleases and gives both sons and daughters to whom He desires, and He makes sterile whomsoever He desires. Omniscient is God alone, and mighty. (49-50)

### Explanation

وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ (٤٦) إِلَى مَرَدٍّ مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ (٤٤)<sup>42</sup>

42. And he whom God leads astray has none to help him. You will see these

In order to sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws), this verse refers to an established practice of God related to guiding people and leading them astray: those who are led astray by God because they prefer going astray are deprived by God from the urge and will to be guided, and he who loses God's support and help in this regard will find no other help. At this stage, however much the Prophet (sws) may try, he will not be able to guide such people who have been cursed by God in this manner.

The word الظَّالِمِينَ refers to the aforementioned wrongdoers whom the Almighty has led astray. The use of this attribute for them shows that these people in fact deserved this treatment: they deserved to be led astray because they did not use the abilities bestowed to them by God by not giving due importance to the innate guidance provided to them by Him; on the contrary, they blindly followed their desires as a result of which they became incriminated with disbelief and polytheism and ended up wronging their own souls. The verse says that today these unfortunate people are very proud on their attitude; but when they see the punishment of God they will longingly express if any option remains to return to the previous world so that they could earn some reward by doing good deeds and secure themselves from this punishment.

وَتَرَاهُمْ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا خَاشِعِينَ مِنَ الدُّلِّ يَنْظُرُونَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ خَفِيٍّ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ  
الْحَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ مُّقِيمٍ (٤٥)<sup>43</sup>

The antecedent of the pronoun in يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا is the الْعَذَابُ (punishment) mentioned in the previous verse. The word الْعَذَابُ is referred to by a feminine pronoun even though it is masculine because it actually refers to Hell or the fire of Hell which are feminine nouns in Arabic. In this manner, it is as if the nature of الْعَذَابُ has been explained. This style is very common in Arabic.

The verses say that today these people inebriated by their successful life are making fun of this punishment; however, the day in which they will face it they will out of humiliation look at each other with furtive glances with faces bent down. When a criminal is taken to the place of his execution, he does not have the guts to open his eyes wide to see the place

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wrongdoers that when they face the punishment, they will exclaim: "Is there a way that can lead us back again to the world?" And you shall see them brought before Hell such that they will bend down in humiliation looking to one another with furtive glances.

43. And the true believers will say: "The real losers are those who put themselves and their people to loss on the Day of Judgement." Beware, these wrongdoers shall surely suffer everlasting torment.

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of execution as well to the executioner; he tries to look at them furtively.

After witnessing their humiliation and wretchedness, the believers will cry out that the real failures are those people who not only put themselves to loss on the Day of Judgement but also their family and associates by causing them to deviate from the right path through pressurizing them or teaching ill to them. The implication of the believers is that these short-sighted people being inebriated with the successes of life regarded them to be failures in the previous life; however, that failure is in fact no failure; real failure is failure on the Day of Judgement.

The sentence *أَلَا إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ مُّقِيمٍ* states why real failure is failure on the Day of Judgement: they should beware that the reason for this is that the wrongdoers will be inflicted with eternal punishment which they will not be able to ward off. In other words, the pains and pleasures of this world are temporary; however, the punishment of the Hereafter is eternal; for this reason, real failure is the failure people will encounter in the Hereafter.

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ (٤٦)<sup>44</sup>

The words *مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ* mean “against God”. The implication is that when on the Day of Judgement, these people will be engulfed by the punishment of God, none of their deities and helpers which they proudly relied on will be of any avail to them against God.

In the sentence *وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ* the same subject which was discussed in verse forty four above is raised again with slight change in words. Because of their evil deeds the Almighty has left them to wander astray and those whom God leaves to wander astray find no way – neither in this world nor in the Hereafter.

اسْتَجِيبُوا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ مَّلْجَأٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ نَّكَيرٍ (٤٧)<sup>45</sup>

In my opinion, the expression *مِّنْ اللَّهِ* is connected to *يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ* and *أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ*. *يَوْمٌ* is an adjective that qualifies *يَوْمٌ*. This call is meant for admonishment and warning. They are told that it is still time to accept the call of their Lord and earn success in the Hereafter. Otherwise they should remember

44. And there they will have no helpers who will be able to help them against God. And he whom God leads astray has no way to go.

45. And respond to the call of your Lord before that day arrives from God which cannot be put off. On that day, there will be no refuge for you nor shall you be able deny anything.

that when the day which is certain to come from their Lord arrives, it will be immaterial whether they accept the call or not; on that day, they will have no place to take refuge in neither will they be able to reject anything on that day; whatever comes before them, they will have to submit to it come what may. Generally, people have translated the word تَكْبِير as “denial”; however, its correct meaning is to reject something repulsive because of a sense of honour.” I have researched out this word at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*.

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فََرِحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ<sup>46</sup>(٤٨)

This verse addresses the Prophet (sws). He is told that if these people accept his call then it is okay; however, if they don't, then he should not the slightest care about them for he has not been sent as someone to impose his call upon them and make them forcibly accept it; his only responsibility is to present his message before people. In verse six earlier, this subject has been raised.

The words وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فََرِحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ unveil the reason for the evasion of people: they are mean and ungrateful people. When such people receive the blessings and favours of God instead showing gratitude, they are overcome by conceit and arrogance, and if they are faced with some calamity in retribution of their deeds they end up in despair and frustration and show ungratefulness. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is told not to expect them to adopt the right path; the affluence and riches they have today have inebriated them so much that they are not prepared to listen to anyone; however, if the Almighty makes them taste the slightest of torment that they are demanding, they will become despondent..

لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنِائًا وَيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ الدُّكُورَ (٤٩) أَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنَاثًا وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ عَقِيمًا إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ<sup>47</sup>(٥٠)

46. If they pay no heed, then We have not sent you to be their keeper. Your only responsibility is to deliver. And when We bless man with some mercy of Ours, he rejoices in it; and if a calamity befalls him because of his deeds, he becomes ungrateful.

47. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He will. He gives daughters to whom He pleases and sons to whom He pleases and gives both sons and daughters to whom He desires, and He makes

These verses state the belief deprived of which they have become mean and ungrateful. If these people believe that the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to God; He alone creates what He wants and bestows whatever He wants to whomsoever He wants, they would not have ended up in this state and would have expressed their gratitude on the favours of God and would have expressed patience on the trials of God.

The words يَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ إِنَّا وَيَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ أَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنَّا وَبِجَعْلٍ يَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ إِنَّا وَيَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ أَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنَّا وَبِجَعْلٍ mention the specific after the general: it is God Who gives daughters to whomsoever He pleases and sons to whosoever He pleases and gives both sons and daughters to whomsoever He desires and deprives whomsoever He wants of any offspring. It is He who knows all and is very powerful and whatever He does He does on the basis of His knowledge and power and no one other has any role in this. For this reason, it is the duty of people to trust God in all affairs; they should neither be arrogant nor helpless and nor should they devote themselves to anyone other than Him.

#### Section VI: Verses (51-53)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. Deliberation will show that these closing verses not only relate to the whole *sūrah* in its collective capacity but also are deeply connected to the previous section. I have been explaining this style of the Qur'ān at various places of this *tafsīr* that generally a *sūrah* ends on the topic with which it begins. Thus, this *sūrah* began with the words كَذَلِكَ يُوحِي إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ie. this Qur'ān is a revelation of the genre of revelations sent by God to other prophets and messengers. After that the similarity between the purpose and means is explained and the *sūrahs* ends with the topic with which it began. Thus in the end the words occur are: وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا. They are very similar to the words found at the beginning. This is a very clear argument on the fact that the whole *sūrah* from the beginning to the end is one unit.

The relation of this section with the previous one is that the previous one ended with a mention of the reason of the evasion shown by the opponents. One big reason for their evasion was that they would say that if Muḥammad (sws) claims that God reveals His words to Him, why does not God talk to them as well? This objection is answered in these verses and it will become evident from the *tafsīr* of these verses that this answer is very comprehensive and conclusive.

Readers may study the forthcoming verses in the light of this

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sterile whomsoever He desires. Omniscient is God alone, and mighty.

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background.

### Text and Translation

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ  
بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيُّ حَكِيمٌ (٥١) وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي  
مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِنْ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا وَإِنَّكَ  
لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٥٢) صِرَاطِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا  
إِلَى اللَّهِ تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ (٥٣)

And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His permission, he sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and Wise. And thus have We revealed to you a spirit from our matters. Neither did you know anything of a Book or anything of faith; but We made it a light whereby We guide those of Our servants whom We desire. And indeed you guide to a straight path: the path of God, to whom belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. Beware! To God all things shall in the end return. (51-53)

### Explanation

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ  
بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيُّ حَكِيمٌ (٥١)<sup>48</sup>

This verse answers the objection or demand of the opponents which is cited at many places in the Qur'ān viz. if God converses with this prophet as he claims, why does he not converse face to face with them (لَوْ) (لَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ) ? What is so special about him that God speaks to him only and does not regard them to be worthy of conversation even though they are much more affluent and honourable than him?

In response to this, the verse says that no mortal has the status that God talk to him face to face. He talks to them through revelation or from behind a veil or through an envoy of His who reveals to that mortal – whom God chooses to speak to – with God's permission whatever He desires.

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48. And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His permission, he sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and Wise.



The words وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ point to the fact that what hinders direct conversation with God is man's own frailty and inability. The person of the Almighty is so exalted and lofty and the centre of radiance and light that no mortal is able to face Him directly. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān that Moses (sws), a mighty messenger of God, expressed his wish to see God. He was told by the Almighty that he cannot see Him; even mountains are unable to witness God's radiance so how can he be in a position to do so.

The words إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِي بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ say that if the Almighty speaks with mortals, then there are three ways that He adopts for this.

First, through revelation. This means "to implant words in the heart." It is signified by the words <sup>49</sup>إِلْقَاءُ فِي الرُّوحِ and <sup>50</sup>نَفْثَ فِي الرُّوحِ in Ḥadīth literature. In other words, the Almighty implants His message in the heart of His messenger and the messenger preserves it. It is evident from the words that what is implanted is not in the form of a thought or an idea: it is in the form of distinct words which the messenger hears and understands and also preserves. Here it needs to specially be kept in mind that the Almighty has delineated His way of conversing with His messengers. For this reason, in my opinion, it is incorrect to believe that revelation is implanted in the heart in the form of a thought or an idea and it is the messenger who gives his own words to this thought.

Second, from behind a veil. Here a prophet does hear the words and voice of God but he is not able to see Him. An example of this is the address of God to Moses (sws). It is mentioned both in the Torah and the Qur'ān that God conversed with Moses (sws) but did not see Him. Moreover, the Qur'ān has specified that God never conversed with any other prophet except Moses (sws). This honour solely rests with him.

Third, the Almighty sends a messenger ie an angel and that angel sends whatever revelation God wants to, to the heart of the prophet. For example, it is stated in Sūrah Baqarah:

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلْجَبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ (٢: ٩٧)

Tell them: "He who is the enemy of Gabriel should remember that God has revealed this Qur'ān to your heart with the command of

49. See, for example: Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Aynī, 'Umdah al-qārī, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-turāth, n.d.), 44.

50. See, for example: Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Bāqī ibn Yūsuf al-Zurqānī, Sharḥ Mu'aṭṭā' Imām Mālik, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1411 AH), 20.

God.” (2:97)

In Sūrah Naḥl, the same thing is stated thus:

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ (١٦: ١٠٢)

Say: “The Holy Spirit has revealed this Qur’ān from your Lord with the truth.” (16: 102)

These are the three ways in which God converses with His prophets. The first of these two are distinguished by the third that in them the words are revealed to a prophet directly without any intermediary ie Gabriel is not present in between. However, in the third, Gabriel is present in the form of an intermediary. Among these three ways, two – ie. the first and third – are very common. The second of these was specifically adopted for Moses (sws). No other prophet, as referred to earlier, had this distinction. If the principle of mentioning important things first is kept in mind, it is evident that the first of the ways mentioned is the most superior.

Here only three ways are mentioned because the question in consideration of which this verse has been revealed necessitated the mention of these three. However, it is mentioned in the Qur’ān that besides these three ways there are two others as well through which the Almighty informs some of His intentions to some of His near ones.

One of these ways is that an angel assumes the form of a human being and delivers the message of God. Examples of this exist in the accounts of Abraham (sws), Lot (sws) and Mary (sws) which are mentioned in detail in the Qur’ān.

The second of these says is visions and dreams. Whatever the Almighty wants His creatures to do are given as a directive in these vdreams or prophets are shown certain incidents and sights. For example, the directive of sacrificing his son was given to Abraham (sws) in a dream. Similarly, many incidents regarding the battle of Badr were shown to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) in a dream. A very important dream is mentioned in Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl.

It is evident from these details that there are five ways in all in which the Almighty converses with His prophets or inspires them with a revelation. Except for being directly spoken to which is the distinction of Moses (sws), each of the other four ways were employed by God to communicate with Muḥammad (sws). It may also be kept in mind that Moses (sws) too was blessed with the favour of being directly spoken to once or twice. The rest of the Torah was revealed to him in the manner

other scriptures were revealed.

God has referred to two of His attributes at the of the verse viz. **إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ**. One of them highlights His exaltedness, greatness and loftiness and the other His wisdom and the consequences of His wisdom which include mercy, justice and guidance. By combining these two attributes, it becomes evident that so exalted is the person of God that neither does He need to converse with anyone nor does anyone have the status to converse with Him. However, besides this exaltedness and loftiness God is also wise, just and merciful; for this reason, in order to guide His creatures and to reform them He speaks to them out of His grace and for this He adopted ways which have been outlined earlier. In other words, what is implied is that people who press and demand that God should talk to them face to face are neither aware of the exaltedness and loftiness of God nor of their own meager existence. Such people will be doomed by this arrogance of theirs.

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٥٢)  
صِرَاطِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ<sup>51</sup>

These verses address the Prophet Muḥammad (sws): he has been sent **رُوح** (*rūḥ*) in the known and conventional way. **رُوح** Means “revelation”. By calling it with this name, the purpose is to highlight that in revelation is the means of real life of the Prophet (sws) as well as for those who adopt it. All divine scriptures allude to this reality. As pointed out by Jesus (sws): “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew, 4:4)

The words **مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا** form an attribute for the word **رُوح** as an answer to a spontaneous question that may arise. It refers to the fact that this **رُوح** is from among God’s matters belonging to the unseen (*ghayb*). Its nature and form is only known to God or to the prophet who experiences it; not everyone can have an idea of its nature and reality; for this reason, neither should everyone go after trying to find out its form not should a sensible person deny it simply because he himself has not experienced it. People who are not aware of the pangs of liver pain do not have the right to deny

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51. And thus have We revealed to you a spirit from our matters. Neither did you know anything of a Book or anything of faith; but We made it a light whereby We guide those of Our servants whom We desire. And indeed you guide to a straight path: the path of God, to whom belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. Beware! To God all things shall in the end return.

the existence of such a pain. This subject is discussed in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl in the following words:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٨٥:١٧)

And they ask you about *rūḥ* [*wahī*]. Tell them: "This *rūḥ* is from among my Lord's matters. And little indeed is the knowledge given to you." (17:85)

It needs to be kept in mind that when the prophets of God expressed before their people that God sends down His رُوح to them, the foolish among them made fun of its existence and remarked that why they themselves are not able to experience it. This question is answered in the above-cited verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, and to refer to this very answer the word رُوح is qualified by مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا in the verse under discussion so that if this question arises in the mind of someone, gets its answer within the discourse.

There is another aspect of this to which I shall allude in the *tafsīr* of verses 4-5 of Sūrah Dukhān and verse 4 of Sūrah Qadr.

The words: مَا كُنْتُ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِنْ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ mention the benefits of this رُوح: the prophet was not aware of the book and faith; however, as result of this revelation from God, the Almighty made his heart so radiant that he became a walking lighthouse for his people, and God blesses this radiance of revelation to whomsoever He desires among His people. His desire is dependent upon the ability of a person to receive this radiance. He blesses such people with this radiance because every desire and intention of God is based on His wisdom and justice. Here it should be kept in consideration that just as not every one is worthy of being selected as a prophet; God selects only those among His servants for this position who are worthy of it; in a similar manner, this radiance too can be received by those who have the ability. Thus these words answer the question of the people who ask why Muḥammad (sws) was selected from among themselves for this position and why did He leave them out. Moreover, these words also sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that not every one can benefit from the light he is showing them; only those people will benefit from it who will prove worthy of it; this light will blind the eyes of those who are not worthy of it instead of showing guidance to them.

Here it may be kept in mind that the relationship between the Book and Faith is the same as that between the body and the soul. The Book is totally a manifestation and embodiment of Faith. Put in simple words, the Book is the statement of the requirements of Faith. For this reason,

both are related to one another as the body is to its soul. As far as the Book is concerned, the Prophet (sws) was not aware of it because he was unlettered; however, the negation of Faith is with reference to its details and requirements; in other words, the Prophet (sws) was unaware of all the details and requirements of Faith otherwise the prophets of God are full conversant with the light of their upright nature. Thus Faith in its concise form is found in them which after becoming irradiated by the light of divine revelation lights up the whole world like the sun. Since the relationship between the radiance of human nature and the radiance of divine revelation is that of a particle and the sun, for this reason there exists a negation for the former in this verse; however, it is nothing but a particle of this glittering sun and only those people can benefit from the light of this divine revelation who protect the light of their nature. Those who deprive themselves of it deprive themselves of this light shown to them by the prophets of God.

My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī is of the view that the word Faith here refers to Wisdom. In his opinion, Faith is an amalgam of three things: words, deeds and the circumstances which befall a person and Wisdom too has this essence. So when the verse says that the Prophet (sws) was not aware of the Book and Faith what was meant was that he was not aware of the Book and Wisdom. In other words, the word “Faith” actually is an explanation of the word “Wisdom”.

The words **وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ** state the blessing of this light with reference to the creatures of this world: the Almighty blessed this light to the Prophet (sws) and now he is guiding people to this straight path of God to Whom belongs everything in the heavens and the earth. If people want to succeed in the Hereafter, they should duly value this guidance given by him.

The words **أَلَا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ** at the end warn people that they should listen up that all matters will return to God to whom belongs everything. So they should be ready to come to His presence and be accountable for their deeds.

With the blessing of God, the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* ends on these lines. **وَأَخْرَجُوا دَعْوَانَا أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ** (and our last declaration is that all gratitude belongs to God)

Raḥmānābād,

12<sup>th</sup> December, 1975 AD

8<sup>th</sup> Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 1395 AH